

*Gal 7 Mc*

OBSERVATIONS

ON

CHRONIC WEAKNESS.

BY

THOMAS WITHERS, M.D.

Y O R K:

Printed by A. WARD; and Sold by T. CADELL, in  
the Strand, and W. NICOLL, in St. Paul's Church-  
Yard, London.

MDCCLXXVII.

*14*

RESERVATIONS

O. N.

CHRONIC WEAKNESS.



M.D.

Y O R K

Printed by A. Ward, and sold by T. Cadell, in  
the Strand, and W. Nicol, in St. Paul's Church.  
London.

MDCCLXXVII



**Sir JOHN PRINGLE, Bart.**

**Physician in Ordinary to Her MAJESTY,**

**A N D**

**President of the Royal Society.**

**S I R,**

**I** Take this opportunity of acknowledging my obligations to you, for your perusal of a treatise lately published by me on the Abuse of Medicine. I know that vanity is a weakness; yet I confess that mine was somewhat flattered by the favorable opinion you conceived of that publication, and the obliging manner in which you were pleased to signify it to me. The study of medicine, Sir, is one of my greatest pleasures; and I should be happy

iv . DEDICATION.

to promote, in any degree, the successful practice of that useful and noble art. If, at the same time, any production of mine should happen to afford the smallest entertainment in a leisure hour to a man of your character and talents, so eminently distinguished in the literary world, I shall have attained a point beyond my expectation. It is, Sir, with singular satisfaction, that I have the honor of sending these few pages into the world under your patronage, and of subscribing myself, with all respect and gratitude,

Your much obliged,

And most obedient servant,

THO. WITHERS.

York, March 14,

1777.

## ADVERTISEMENT.

**C**HRONIC WEAKNESS is a frequent, distressing, and sometimes dangerous disease. It attacks persons of all ages, of both sexes, of every temperament, and in every climate. It is accompanied always with anxiety, and often with severe and lasting pains.

Chronic weakness is a term, which is sufficiently understood by every one, who is in the least conversant with medical writings. It is a species of weakness, which ought to be distinguished from the sudden depression of strength, that occurs in fevers and other acute diseases. Considering the multiplicity of medical authors, it is not a little surprising, that the subject of chronic weakness should never have been fully and accurately discussed. The great Boerhaave, under the title of the relaxed fibre, touched upon the outlines of this disease



vi      ADVERTISEMENT.

disease in his elements of the practice of medicine. His learned commentator, Van Swieten, has enlarged upon the subject. But there are many important facts, relating both to the history and to the cure of this complaint, which are not to be found among their observations.

The author was at first induced to bestow particular attention on this subject, because he saw that several of his friends and acquaintance labored under the complaint, and he was anxious to relieve them. Success in a few instances was followed with an opportunity of practice in many others.—The author does not imagine that this essay contains any new observations on chronic weakness, which may not have occurred to men of large experience and extensive knowledge in the profession of medicine; but he hopes, that to others who have not had the most desirable opportunities of improvement, a more full and accurate account, than he has hitherto met with, of the symptoms of chronic weakness,

## ADVERTISEMENT. vii

weakness, together with its causes, distinction, prognostic, and method of cure, will not be unacceptable.

Chronic weakness is not only a source of much misery in itself, but it lays the foundation for a variety of other diseases of the most fatal kind. Hence the necessity of a timely application of remedies for the removal of a disorder, which is productive of such unhappy consequences. This species of weakness is universally allowed by physicians, to constitute a most important part of the numerous chronic disorders with which it is united. The study, therefore, of chronic weakness, is a necessary prelude to the study of chronic complaints in general. The author of these pages intends, if his health and leisure will permit, to treat hereafter of several other diseases incident to the human body, and for this reason also, found it expedient to premise these observations on chronic weakness.

The

## viii ADVERTISEMENT.

The author, considering the nature and danger of the disease, was sorry to find that it was sometimes looked upon as an unintelligible case, not to be distinguished by any particular name. At other times he found it mistaken for the hypochondriac complaint, the hysterical affection, a latent gout, a low nervous fever, and various other disorders which existed only as effects of chronic weakness. In consequence of such mistakes, the practice was necessarily imperfect, confused, and erroneous. Sometimes it accidentally relieved, but often it increased the malady. It was always unsteady, being regulated by no principles, and founded on no rational system. By this means the disease, through imprudent treatment, was often rendered more obstinate, and even incurable.

The following observations have been carefully collected from a variety of cases, both in private practice and in public hospitals. These cases are still in the possession of the writer, but it will be unnecessary

fary



## ADVERTISEMENT. ix

sary and uninteresting to crowd the present work by entering into a minute detail of them. In selecting these observations on chronic weakness from the above-mentioned cases, the author has been particularly cautious to set forth every fact which might be conducive to health, and he has been equally cautious to suppress every idea of theory which, though capable of some support from sophistical reasonings, was not confirmed by experience, and might have led to pernicious practice.

CON-

ADVERTISEMENT.

try and uninteresting to crowd the present work by entering into a minute detail of them. In selecting these observations on chronic venereal from the above-mentioned cases, the author has been particularly cautious to set forth every fact which might be conducive to health, and he has been equally cautious to suppress every idea of theory which, though capable of some support from philosophical reasoning, was not confirmed by experience, and might have led to pernicious practice.

C. N.

Histo

Caus

Disti

Met  
re

# C O N T E N T S.

## S E C T I O N I.

History of Chronic Weakness

Page  
1

## S E C T I O N II.

Causes of Chronic Weakness

18

## S E C T I O N III.

Distinction and Prognostic of Chronic Weakness

55

## S E C T I O N IV.

Method of Cure in Chronic Weakness, with  
respect both to Regimen and Medicines

77



# CONTENTS.

## SECTION I.

Page

1

History of Chronic Weakness

## SECTION II.

18

Causes of Chronic Weakness

## SECTION III.

22

Distinction and Prognosis of Chronic Weakness

## SECTION IV.

77

Method of Cure in Chronic Weakness, with  
respect both to Regimen and Medicines

## CHRONIC WEAKNESS.

### SECTION I.

**C**HRONIC WEAKNESS, being a very common disease, merits great attention from the practitioners of medicine. The human race is so much degenerated from its original state of constitutional vigor, that perfect health is rarely seen; and the greatest part of mankind are found to labor, more or less, under the symptoms of chronic weakness. The frequency of this disease is much to be regretted, when we reflect that it principally arises from our own negligent and imprudent conduct. Men are not disposed to submit to Nature;

ture; but they wantonly deviate from the laws prescribed by her for their welfare and happiness. Our manner of living is frequently unnatural, and differs widely from the rude simplicity of our ancestors. We are often indolent to an excess. We not only indulge ourselves in luxuries, but weakly think them necessary for the real comfort and enjoyment of life.—The disorder, that I am going to treat of, is one which afflicts mankind in a strange variety of forms, and conduces greatly to their misery and destruction.

The term *CHRONIC* is used here to distinguish this species of weakness from that which occurs in acute diseases. The one comes on suddenly, the other steals upon the patient by slow degrees. The depression of strength, consequent on febrile complaints, is often removed in a short time by the assistance only of a mild restorative diet. Chronic weakness, on the contrary, is difficult to remove, and its cure is generally found to be the work of time. Yet so efficacious are the remedies and regimen employed in the treatment of this complaint, that few patients would fail of obtaining considerable relief, if they had but sufficient resolution to pursue with steadiness those means of cure,  
which



## CHRONIC WEAKNESS. 3

which the experience of ages has proved to be successful.—As far as the subject will admit, I shall enumerate the symptoms of chronic weakness in that order in which they naturally occur.

Chronic weakness usually begins with morbid affections of the stomach and bowels. The functions of the alimentary canal are of the first importance; but its structure is delicate and tender. Flatulence, acidity, heart-burn, costiveness, or colic pains frequently afford the first signs of the approaching disease. A diminution of appetite and a slight dejection of spirits soon occur. The muscular strength is impaired, and the patient feels a languor and an aversion to motion. This disposition to indolence continually grows stronger, and a sense of weariness is easily induced.

By degrees those symptoms increase, and the whole constitution is more and more depressed. The simple solids are relaxed, and the nervous power is diminished. The uneasiness of the mind, arising from a debilitated state of the body, becomes more considerable, and contributes much to accelerate the progress of the disease. The aliment is often taken without appetite,

## 4 HISTORY OF

and is very imperfectly digested. The stomach and bowels are distended with air, and, in consequence of that distension, they are thrown into convulsive contractions, attended with pain and anxiety. A considerable quantity of limpid water, or of the acid and putrid matters contained in the stomach, regurgitates frequently into the mouth. In this state of the patient there is sometimes a sense of palpitation in the breast, with a shortness and difficulty of breathing. The head, from the great connection which subsists between that part and the stomach, is affected with pain and dizziness. The pain of the head in some cases is extremely constant and severe. The dizziness arises sometimes to such a height that the patient staggers like a drunken man. The food, according to its nature, is apt to run too far into the acid or putrid fermentation, and to load the alimentary canal with acrid and offensive matters. In this situation of the patient, a diarrhæa sometimes takes place, which is a natural and salutary effort of nature. At other times obstinate costiveness and colic pains supervene.

The action of the heart and arteries is greatly impaired, and the circulation of the blood is languid

## CHRONIC WEAKNESS. 5

languid and imperfect. The contractions of the heart are sometimes slow, but generally frequent and always weak. The pulse of course is often feeble, irregular, and frequent. If the arterial system be under a state of contraction, and there be an inflammatory disposition in the habit, the pulse is small and contracted. This symptom occurs in young people of the melancholic or sanguine-melancholic temperament, who are particularly subject to the gout. The blood does not circulate with vigor, and scarcely enters the extreme capillary vessels, which are every where distributed over the surface of the body. Or if the blood enters those vessels, it almost stagnates within them, and gives the countenance a livid, bloated, and unnatural appearance. From this weakness of the circulation, insensible perspiration becomes languid, and the skin appears dry and contracted. As the nervous power and circulation of the blood are defective, the native heat of the body is diminished, and the patient frequently complains of an universal sense of coldness. In this condition he has frequent recourse to large fires and very warm cloathing, which relax the cutaneous pores, increase the irritability of the body, and render it highly obnoxious to the influence of cold.

The



The strength of the patient, in process of time, becomes still more depressed, and a sense of heaviness and lassitude is more easily brought on, either by walking, riding, or any other gentle muscular motion. From this effect an opinion is hastily adopted, that exercise is pernicious, and ought therefore to be avoided; and this opinion is the more readily complied with, as it perfectly coincides with the patient's inactive disposition. In this state of the complaint, a moderate exertion even of muscular strength exhausts the nervous system, destroys the appetite, produces sickness, palpitation of the heart, and quickness of breathing.

The mind becomes as indolent as the body, and as incapable of almost every species of exertion. Its efforts are weak and fluctuating; its judgments various and undecisive. It is unfit for deep reflection or close attention to any particular subject. The memory is greatly impaired, and not exercised without a sensation of uneasiness. The association of ideas is often imperfect. Slight contradictions or small violations of the rules of ceremony and politeness offend the patient, and induce a transient fit of grief or anger which leaves him dejected and exhausted. The least seeming neglect is  
fully

## CHRONIC WEAKNESS. 7

fully weighed, and sometimes mistaken for an intended affront. This weakness of mind often appears in persons whose natural temper is amiable and indulgent. Along with these symptoms we find timidity, dejection, or even despair to be the frequent attendants of chronic weakness. Such mental debility occurs in patients who were before remarkable for their firmness, vivacity, and acuteness of understanding. During this dejected state of the mind, the whole constitution is amazingly disturbed. The distribution of the blood and of the nervous influence is very unequal. The heart palpitates, the stomach and intestines swell with flatulence, and there is frequently a copious discharge of pale urine. At the same time we must observe, that it is not uncommon in this disease for the patient to have a mind unaffected by fear, in a bodily frame that is weakened and exhausted.

From the want of vigor in the brain and of greater force of circulation, obstructions of the menses frequently occur, attended with pains in the back and in the region of the womb. In some cases the menses do not make their appearance at the usual period of life. When they do occur, they are often irregular, and accom-

accompanied with fever, pain, and anxiety. By consent of parts spasmodic contractions of the bowels are induced. If there be a topical laxity of the uterine vessels, the fluor albus or copious irregular discharges of blood, accompanied with severe pains, are the common consequence. But it is well known, that a suppression of the menses, or too frequent and copious evacuations from the uterus, are always followed with considerable depression of strength.

In this state of the constitution, nutrition is very imperfectly performed. The animal oil is reabsorbed; the blood-vessels are not sufficiently distended; the flesh seems loose and wasted; and the skin is every where fallow. The countenance in particular exhibits a dry, palid, and unwholesome appearance. The eyes are dull and heavy. The tongue is white and covered with a viscid matter. The uvula and velum pendulum of the palate, in some cases, are at times so relaxed as to prove extremely troublesome. The lips lose their color, and the breath, from the foulness of the stomach, is often remarkably foetid. The extremities of the body are not unfrequently affected with anxiety, and an aching pain of a peculiar nature, distinct



## CHRONIC WEAKNESS. 9

distinct from chronic rheumatism. At other times chronic rheumatism occurs, which retards the cure and greatly distresses the patient. The joints affected with rheumatism feel, in consequence of their weakness, cold and dry, when the rest of the body is in a warm and natural state.—The urine is various; sometimes turbid and high-coloured; sometimes pale; and from the relaxation of the secretory vessels of the kidneys, it is often separated in too large a quantity. This species of diabetes is commonly attended with thirst and great diminution of strength.—If a woman who labors under chronic weakness becomes pregnant, she is, from the relaxation of the womb, very liable to miscarry. The os internum of the womb sometimes yields to the pressure made upon it in a state of pregnancy, and a miscarriage is the consequence.—As the patient can only take a small quantity of aliment, and digest it but in a very imperfect manner, the blood is much impoverished, and the serum bears too large a proportion to the lymph and red globular part. It is sometimes owing to this unnatural quantity of serum in the blood, that the surface of the body appears tinged with a yellowish color; for the extreme vessels necessarily exhibit an appearance upon the surface,

B

face, somewhat similar to that of their contents. When this symptom occurs, without any obstruction of the liver, the stools are of a proper color, and the passage of the bile is free.

The patient is often afflicted with want of sleep. At other times, his sleep is interrupted, unrefreshing, and disturbed with sudden wakings and frightful dreams. The anxious patient imagines himself, during his short and imperfect repose, to be sometimes falling from a high precipice, to be suffering punishment for having committed the most horrid acts of injustice; or, by some unforeseen misfortune, to be plunged with his whole family into the most distressful situation.

The organa virilia are in a weakened and relaxed state. There is frequently a discharge of thick viscid mucus from the urethra and vesiculæ seminales. The testes are affected with transient pains, and a rotatory motion. A small quantity of semen proves too great a stimulus to the relaxed seminal vessels, and consequently somnia libidinosa & emissiones nocturnæ are very frequent \*. If the relaxation of those parts be still greater, evacuations of semen, sine penis tentigine, occur at uncertain

\* Pathol. Infit. Gaub. § 562.

## CHRONIC WEAKNESS. 11

tain times, which weaken the constitution as much as they depress the spirits.

The hemorrhoids are a troublesome symptom in this complaint. A languid circulation, a relaxed state of the hemorrhoidal veins, and a costive habit of body, together with the natural depending situation of those vessels in a loose cellular membrane, favor the frequent occurrence of the piles. Sometimes there is only pain and swelling without any evacuation of blood. At other times the evacuation is considerable, and conduces not a little to hasten the fatal termination of the disease. In some cases, nevertheless, the patient, if he previously labored under a venous plethora, finds a sensible relief in consequence of a moderate discharge of blood from the hemorrhoidal veins.

Of all the parts of the body, the circulation of the blood through the vena portæ is the slowest. For in distributing a certain proportion of blood through the liver, nature deviates from her ordinary course, and supplies the place of an artery by a vein, which divides itself into innumerable branches through the substance of that glandular body. It was necessary that the blood should move on slowly,



in order to serve for the separation of a sufficient quantity of bile. But if the circulation through the liver be slower than is natural, obstructions and biliary concretions are apt to occur \*. In the advanced stages of chronic weakness these symptoms are not uncommon, accompanied with pain in the region of the liver. In this case a yellowness of the skin is observable, arising from an obstruction of the biliary ducts and a reabsorption of the bile. The patient is costive, the stools are whitish, and the urine is high-coloured. As soon as these bilious symptoms appear, they are too often considered as the original disease, and the case is, without foundation, treated entirely as a jaundice. The biliary symptoms are only the consequence of chronic weakness, and though they require a particular treatment, they are by no means to be regarded as the primary complaint.

In this relaxed state of the general constitution, and particularly of the alimentary canal, worms frequently occur as a symptom of chronic weakness. The superabundant quantity of mucus, lodged in the stomach and bowels, forms a convenient nidus for the rise and increase of the different species of worms. This  
symptom

\* Pathol. Inst. Med. § 515.

## CHRONIC WEAKNESS. 13

symptom occurs more frequently in children than in adults. In consequence of an erroneous notion, that worms are the original complaint, and that the proper treatment is by purgative remedies, chronic weakness is often dangerously encreased, the constitution is greatly reduced, and, along with the worms, the patient is nearly destroyed. In this case the cure unfortunately proves far more dangerous than the complaint, which it was intended to remove.

In the progress of this disease the symptoms of hectic fever sooner or later make their appearance. The stimulus of a small quantity of food, particularly if it be of a heating nature, has a considerable effect on a weakened constitution. It excites the action of the heart and arteries, quickens the pulse, and produces a flushing of the face, with a sensation of great warmth in the palms of the hands, and sometimes in the soles of the feet. The febrile paroxysm, which naturally occurs in the evening, is encreased. It generally comes on before midnight, and after having continued for some time, terminates in a copious flow of the perspirable matter. It is sometimes preceded with a regular cold fit. Quickness of pulse, an unnatural

natural heat of the body, and a sense of anxiety, are symptoms which prevail during this febrile affection.

The irritability of the system encreases, and becomes a source of much uneasiness to the patient. The smallest surprize produces violent agitations both of the mind and of the body. An unexpected incident in even trivial matters will occasion a general tremor of the nerves, and excite the peristaltic motion of the stomach and bowels to such a degree, as immediately to bring on vomiting or a diarrhæa. A slight application of unaccustomed cold has the same effect in exciting the action of the alimentary tube, increasing its evacuation, and aggravating all the symptoms of chronic weakness. The fall of a poker or the sudden shutting of a door is often acutely felt, and produces a troublesome emotion of the animal frame. The unexpected sight of an intimate acquaintance disorders the nervous system. The depression of spirits occurs more frequently and in a much higher degree. The salivary glands are sometimes affected in such a manner, that the saliva is secreted as copiously as if the patient was in a salivation from the use of mercury. The stomach is often so weak and irritable,



table, that even a small quantity of food cannot be retained; it occasions sickness and vomiting. As the peristaltic motion of the bowels is generally languid and weak, the body is usually costive; but in some cases of particular irritability, the peristaltic motion is irregularly encreased, the aliment passes through the intestines in a crude state, and the stools are loose and frequent, occurring for the most part soon after the stomach is acted upon by the stimulus of fresh food. The contractions of the heart and arteries become weaker, quicker, and more irregular, and the patient is subject to frequent faintings. The exhalant vessels, in the last stage of the disease, lose their contractile power; nocturnal sweats and a colliquative diarrhæa occur; serous fluids are sometimes effused into the cellular membrane and cavities of the body; the legs, the hands, and the face swell, and various dropical symptoms appear, attended with violent pains of the abdomen. These hydropic affections arise from general weakness and relaxation of the system, and are the last fatal marks of a broken constitution. Thus the patient, after an uncertain term of years, is exhausted and destroyed.

These

These are the symptoms of chronic weakness, carefully collected from a variety of cases, which have fallen under my own observation. The facts here enumerated are taken from nature, and ascertained by experience. The symptoms of chronic weakness occur in very different degrees, and I believe they are never all to be observed in the same patient. Some one part of the body is in general more afflicted with the disease than other parts. The head, the heart, the stomach and bowels, the kidneys, the womb, or the organa virilia, are frequently the principal seat of the complaint. In this case the patient is apt to overlook his less painful sufferings, and to dwell chiefly on those morbid affections, which he finds or which he thinks to be the most distressing. Being thus habituated to view his complaint as confined principally to a single part, that part, by this very circumstance, is apt to be more disturbed in the performance of its functions \*, and a fixed topical weak-

\* Dr. Cullen and Dr. Fordyce are of this opinion. I was informed the other day by a learned and worthy gentleman, who was afflicted with a relaxation of one of the upper eye-lids, that whenever he thought most of his complaint, it proved the most troublesome to him. I was acquainted too with a gentleman who was a great hypochondriac, and labored under chronic weakness, who was apt to have giddiness in

## CHRONIC WEAKNESS: 17

weakness is induced. For the pernicious influence of an anxious mind may be extended not only to particular organs, but even to particular parts of the same organ.

in his head, palpitation of his heart, distention of his stomach, or uneasiness in his testes, according as he supposed one or other of those parts to be morbidly affected.

CHRONIC WEAKNESS

SECTION II.

C

THE

I is probable that the proximate cause of chronic weakness consists principally in a want of nervous energy, in an enervated mobility of the nervous system, and in a diminished cohesion of the particles of matter which constitute the simple solids. The proximate cause, as here stated, seems to be composed by the symptoms of the disease; and indeed it consists of facts, the knowledge of which is of the first importance in regulating the cure. The following and relaxation of the simple solids, the weakness



CHRONIC WEAKNESS.  
weakness is induced for the previous in-  
fluence of an acute disease may be extended  
not only to particular organs, but even to par-  
ticular parts of the same organ.

C A U S E S  
OF

CHRONIC WEAKNESS.

SECTION II.

THE  
**I**T is probable that the immediate and  
PROXIMATE CAUSE of chronic weakness  
consists principally in a want of nervous  
energy, in an encreased mobility of the ner-  
vous system, and in a diminished cohesion of  
the particles of matter which constitute the  
simple solids. The proximate cause, as here  
stated, seems to be confirmed by the symp-  
toms of the disease; and indeed it consists of  
facts, the knowledge of which is of the first  
importance in regulating the cure. The soft-  
ness and relaxation of the simple solids, the  
weakness

## CHRONIC WEAKNESS. 19

weakness and irritability of the moving powers, the dejection and timidity of the mind, are the natural consequences of such a morbid state of the constitution. The mind and body being so intimately connected, the disorders of the one greatly affect the health of the other. From this proximate cause too arise all the signs of languor and debility in the vascular system and in the alimentary canal. The affections of the womb are readily accounted for upon the same view of the disease. From the emptiness of the constitution, and the diminished vigor of the circulation, the evolution of the uterine system is imperfect, and a sufficient congestion of blood in the uterine vessels does not occur. Hence a want of the menstrual evacuation at the period of life in which it usually takes place, or a suppression after it has made its appearance. The too copious and irregular discharges of the menses arise from topical weakness and relaxation of the uterine vessels. But it is needless to go further into the explanation of all the symptoms of chronic weakness, which upon the principles here laid down are obvious in themselves, to any one tolerably acquainted with the institutions of medicine. We shall therefore proceed to the consideration of the PREDISPOSING and OCCASIONAL

CAUSES of the complaint. The enumeration of these, and the method of treatment, will serve to illustrate our doctrine concerning the proximate cause. The occasional causes are such as weaken the nerves and relax the whole constitution, and the method of treatment consists chiefly of the application of those means, which are efficacious in restoring the enervated fibres to a state of vigor.

Chronic weakness is an hereditary disease. Weak parents have often the misfortune to see a weak and sickly offspring. Though the infant should apparently thrive and flourish a while at its first entrance into life, yet, like a plant growing in too shallow a soil, it often droops and pines away before it arrives at a state of maturity. Old and debilitated fathers, sunk with the infirmities of luxury and debauch, can hardly expect to be blest with children whose constitutions are vigorous. The stamina of life are not of a durable kind, and the fruit will necessarily be imperfect. It is a melancholy reflection to a feeling mind, that the weakness and diseases, which arise from indolence, ignorance, and imprudence, should be entailed upon our posterity.



## CHRONIC WEAKNESS. 21

A peculiar delicacy and tenderness of the animal fibres predisposes to this disease. Those who are born with such fibres are injured by slight occasional causes, and are more frequently afflicted with chronic weakness. Persons with light hair, a very fine skin, and a fair complexion, have in general a great delicacy of bodily structure. This temperament, like all others, is founded on the original stamina of life. It is very commonly attended with an irritable state both of body and mind.

Too great fulness of blood distends the vessels beyond their natural tone, and impairs in time the vigor of their contractile power. Nothing is more common than to see, in a course of years, the most healthful constitutions broken and destroyed from this single cause. A miserable train of symptoms, attended with great anxiety of mind and uncommon depression of the vital powers, is sometimes induced by plethora. This cause acts slowly, but its effects are generally certain, and it reduces the most vigorous constitutions to a state of great debility and relaxation. The common causes therefore of plethora become indirectly the causes of chronic weakness. Full living is remarkably injurious to health, and continually proves  
the

the bane and misery of thousands. Excess of animal food has a powerful effect in bringing on the plethoric state. For animal food is considerably more nutritious than vegetable, and therefore is improper to form the principal part of the diet of strong people, who use little exercise. From neglect of this precaution, venous plethora in the decline of life is often induced, which is apt to be dangerously increased by the suppression of the menses, the suppression of the hemorrhoidal flux, or of any other usual evacuation. Weakness of the constitution from plethora, in consequence of full living, is of a very obstinate nature, and extremely difficult to remove.

Neglect of exercise is another cause of chronic weakness, and it is as powerful as it is universal. Nature intended man to be active, and he cannot deviate from her laws without materially injuring himself. A moderate degree of muscular motion is necessary for the due performance of the different functions of the body. Different degrees are requisite for different constitutions. Even infancy and age cannot be preserved in a state of health without gentle exercise, proportioned to their strength. In consequence of the neglect of exercise enumerable

rable evils ensue. The nervous energy fails, digestion and nutrition are imperfect, the blood and other fluids are vitiated, the circulation is languid, the muscular strength is impaired, and the various symptoms of chronic weakness gradually come on.—These ill effects are more certain if solitude be conjoined with indolence. Man is a social creature, and the rational enjoyments of society afford him one of the highest pleasures in life. In solitude the patient is apt to brood over a slight indisposition till he has magnified it into a dangerous complaint. Thus the mind becomes habituated to dwell upon the disease, which circumstance indeed tends much to encrease it.—From these facts it is obvious that all those professions which lead to a sedentary life are of an unhealthful kind. For such is the ignorance or inattention of many, that they will indulge an indolence of disposition as far as they are able, provided that indulgence does not interfere with what they call a prudential regard to their temporal interest and success in life. They pay no attention to their health, till they have lost that blessing for which nothing can compensate. Some who have unhappily fallen into this erroneous practice, presume even to censure the conduct of others who wisely follow a different plan.



plan. They consider them as negligent in their professions. They forget that health is necessary to the successful performance of business, and that moderate exercise is necessary to the preservation of health. Fatal experience too often convinces them of their mistake.

Sudden and violent exertions of strength tend also to enervate the body. Over-distention and too severe action of the muscular fibres proves very pernicious to the nervous system. Nothing is more powerful in destroying the tone of the living solids, and inducing an obstinate degree of weakness. For by this means the action of the stomach, the digestion of the aliment, and the process of nutrition are greatly disturbed. Severe exercise or labor disorders the circulation, vitiates the quality of the fluids, disturbs the secretions, produces copious sweating, forces and weakens the exhalant arteries, and does great injury to the constitution. The lower class of people are very apt to run into these errors, and imprudently to destroy their health. But they should know that all violent labor, and all endeavours to lift great weights, or in any way to exert their whole bodily strength, are extremely dangerous and absurd.

Though

## CHRONIC WEAKNESS. 25

Though sleep is absolutely necessary to the performance of the various functions of the animal economy, yet the nervous power is capable of sustaining life for a certain time without it. Afterwards a new supply of nervous energy is required, which can only be obtained by sleep. Want of sleep destroys the tone of the nervous system; it produces paleness, languor, coldness, indigestion, a weak circulation, and dejection of spirits.—From these facts it is obvious that all public routs, entertainments, and assemblies of every kind, at which the company keep late hours, and convert night into day, contribute greatly to the destruction of health. Nothing can in any measure compensate the loss of the natural hours of rest, but the unnatural conversion of day into night.—It is the want of sleep too that renders every profession and employment unwholesome, in which men are disturbed at the usual hours of rest.

The compression of any important organ is highly injurious to health, and is a common cause of general weakness. The different parts of the body are so exquisitely adapted to each other, that health is the necessary result of the natural action of those parts. Every bu-

D

siness

finess therefore that requires a particular posture of an unwholesome kind, and subjects the workman to compression, is to be considered as a cause of chronic weakness, which is more or less powerful in proportion to the degree of compression, and to the importance of the organ compressed. A moderate compression, continued for a great length of time, will be productive of very pernicious effects. The postures of children, if not particularly attended to, are apt to be of an improper kind. They sometimes make too frequent use of the same position, till they have produced a curvature of the spine. Strong stays are very unfit for children, and often occasion crookedness and disease. Women who lace their stays in such a manner as to be disagreeably tight, compress the most important viscera, and greatly injure their health. Dr. Hunter, in his excellent course of Anatomical lectures, gives instances of stomachs whose shape has been rendered unnatural by the compression of stays. The unfortunate lady, who weakly sacrifices her health to her vanity, will find to her great disappointment that she will not only lose the real beauties of nature, which she might otherwise have possessed, but will be afflicted with pains of the stomach and bowels, with heart-burn,



burn, acidity, indigestion, low spirits, obstruction of the menses, bilious complaints, disorders of the lungs, relaxation of the nerves and many other troublesome symptoms of chronic weakness.—The effects of this species of compression, when a woman is pregnant, are still more pernicious. I have known some women in this state who have laced themselves so tight as greatly to endanger their own lives, as well as the lives of their children. Sickness, want of appetite, indigestion, colic pains, drowsiness, &c. are the frequent but smaller consequences of such imprudent practice during pregnancy.

Impure air has a very considerable effect in weakening the constitution. A constant supply of good fresh air to the lungs is necessary to health. The want of it is often attended with depression both of strength and spirits. The air of large towns is impregnated with smoke, putrid vapours, and various other impurities; and consequently is by no means so strengthening and refreshing as country air. Hence we find numbers of people who suffer materially in their health, when they are under the necessity of living some time in the unwholesome atmosphere, which perpetually surrounds

the great metropolis of this island. Impure air is a cause of chronic weakness, which, tho' sometimes slow, is always certain in its effects. Upon this principle it is evident, that all those trades and employments where men breathe an air loaded with dust, steam, acids, putrid or mephitic vapor, exhalations from noxious metallic substances, &c. may without hesitation be pronounced unwholesome. For this reason the professions of grinding corn, dressing flax, brewing, tanning, painting, working in lead mines, burning charcoal, preparing vitriol, &c. are found to weaken and disorder the constitution. Moist air is relaxing, and weakness is observed to occur in a higher degree in wet seasons and in low marshy countries. The action of the air upon the human body in preserving life seems not to be perfectly understood. Some have imagined that we receive a spirit of a peculiar nature from the air; but this is merely a conjecture. It is more certainly known that we throw off with the air a poisonous matter from the numerous exhalant arteries of the lungs. We find that air, when it has once served the purposes of respiration, extinguishes flame, and proves suddenly fatal to animals which breathe it. As the whole mass of human blood circulates through the lungs,

a considerable quantity of this deleterious vapor is perpetually exhaling. Hence the air in all public places, where there is a large concourse of people, is loaded with this noxious vapor, and consequently unfit for answering fully the important purposes of respiration. Small rooms, when crowded with company, are soon filled with unwholesome exhalations, unless the doors and windows be frequently opened to admit fresh air. To sleep in a small room with the curtains close is, for the same reason, very unhealthful.—But it would be an endless task to point out all the sources of impurity in the air. After these general remarks, it will not be difficult for any one to ascertain many other particular instances of a similar nature. We cannot however neglect in this place the opportunity of acknowledging the great advantages which may be derived to society, from the useful experiments of the learned Dr. Priestley on the subject of air.

Too copious a flow of the milk impoverishes the blood, and diminishes the vigor of the constitution. Milk is found to bear a strong resemblance to the chyle. If the nutritious parts of the blood, instead of supplying nourishment to the body, pass off in too large quantity by the secretion of the breasts, thirst, head-



head-ach, indigestion, loss of appetite, decay of strength, paleness, failure of sight and wasting of the flesh are the common effects. These morbid appearances will more certainly take place in constitutions previously weak and delicate; for when women of relaxed fibres give suck for any length of time, a greater degree of weakness, accompanied with hectic fever, is sometimes induced. Yet it is very improper and even dangerous for the secretion of the milk to be suddenly suppressed after delivery, by the rash efforts of a mistaken art.

Excess in venery is one of the most powerful causes of chronic weakness, and often induces a miserable degree of the complaint. Paleness, languor, coldness, aversion to motion, loss of appetite, diminution of sight, head-ach, vertigo, indigestion, seminal weakness, tremor of the nerves, leanness, and pains in the back are the common consequences of this cause. *Immoderata feminis profusio, non solum utilissimi humoris jactura, sed ipso etiam motu convulsivo, quo emittitur, frequentius repetito, imprimis lædit\*.* Great inequality of constitutional vigor between persons in the married state frequently gives rise to this disease. To indulge in lascivious ideas

\* Pathol. Inst. Med. § 562.

## CHRONIC WEAKNESS. 31

ideas and to run into a wanton excess of venery, is as miserably ruinous of health as it is below the dignity of reason. Onanism proves the sad destruction of many; for in consequence of that pernicious practice, the organa virilia are affected with a most obstinate species of weakness.

Too great heat relaxes and enervates the animal fibres. It is a most universal cause of chronic weakness. The chillness which occurs at the commencement of febrile disorders, has led mankind to be too cautious in defending themselves from the influence of cold, and too indulgent respecting the free application of heat. A great degree of warmth renders the body extremely weak and irritable, and very obnoxious to the action of cold.—The lungs are particularly injured by living in too warm an air. From this cause the patient, especially if the chest be narrow or the lungs obstructed with tubercles, is subjected to frequent attacks of the catarrh, to habitual winter-coughs, and to fatal consumptions.—The influence of a moderate degree of cold is injurious to those only, who are too much exposed to a heated atmosphere. All trades and employments, such as making glass, working

ing in forges, cooking victuals, &c. which expose men to excessive heats, are very dangerous to health. The removal from a temperate climate into a very warm one, gives often a severe stroke to a good constitution, and contributes not a little to bring on the symptoms of chronic weakness. Such a sudden change of climate determines the blood powerfully to the surface of the body, and leaves the larger vessels in a proportionable degree of emptiness, which state is accompanied with a sense of debility. Hot rooms, stoves, large fires, and too many cloaths are perpetual enemies to health. Too much heat impairs the strength of the nervous system, diminishes the tone of the stomach, relaxes the simple solids, and destroys the contractile power of the cutaneous pores. It is very unwholesome to be overloaded with bed-cloaths. The heat of the body in that case is closely confined upon its surface, and sweating is unnaturally promoted. The habit of sweating, however induced, disturbs the equal balance between what is taken into the body and what passes off by the different outlets. In health, the force of the heart and arteries is wisely proportioned to the contractile power of the cutaneous vessels. If, by excess of heat, the equilibrium be destroyed, a diseased state will



will necessarily follow.—The imprudent application of heat in the treatment of acute distempers, has been productive of violent sweating, which, if it did not prove fatal, was always succeeded by great debility and relaxation.—The too frequent use of the warm bath relaxes the nervous system and the muscular fibres. The Bath waters are often extremely abused, and recommended in diseases which they evidently encrease.—The various methods of applying vapor or warm water to the human body, as invented by Dr. Dominiceti, require the greatest caution and judgment to regulate their use in the cure of diseases. In many cases so powerful a remedy may be employed with efficacy and success; but an indiscriminate application of it would certainly be attended with the most fatal consequences to society.

All those causes which weaken the stomach, destroy eventually the tone of the whole system.—Over-distention of the stomach occasions great weakness in that organ. From this cause, its fibres lose their strength of contraction, the digestion of the aliment is impaired, the nutrition of the body is defective, the appetite fails, and the vigor of the constitution is destroyed. To load the stomach with too large a

E

quantity

quantity of food is extremely unwholesome, and productive of various complaints. It is a common error, and ought to be carefully corrected. It is particularly hurtful when the aliment is of a firm texture, of a glutinous nature, of slow solubility, and consequently of difficult digestion.—Hard drinking is a very frequent and fatal cause of weakness in the alimentary canal. Wine and other spirituous liquors, from their stimulant and sedative powers, are capable of injuring, not only the stomach and intestines, but also the brain and nerves. Taken with too great freedom, they at first excite the action of the system to an unnatural degree. This excitement is followed by weakness and depression of strength. To be frequently intoxicated is miserably destructive of health, and to drink freely is a practice that can by no means be indulged with impunity.—We may therefore affirm, upon the whole, that a stimulating diet to a healthful constitution is unnatural and pernicious\*. Full living and the too liberal use of generous fermented liquors encrease the quantity of the fluids, and induce plethora, which state, as we have before said, is a frequent and powerful cause of weakness. All high-seasoned things are unwholesome. They err greatly who

\* Haller. Prim. Lin. p. 342.

who are of opinion that a man may indulge his appetite at pleasure, if he observe but rules of moderation with respect to the quantity of his food. Pepper, mustard, ginger, mace, and many other spices are too stimulating to be freely employed with safety to the constitution. The stomach, from their too liberal use, becomes accustomed to an unnatural stimulus, and by habit is rendered unable to perform its function without them.—The sedative quality likewise of tea and coffee injures the tone of the stomach and weakens the nervous system\*. The heat of the water is also pernicious. If the water be hot, it hardens the fibres of the stomach and destroys their texture,

From the various excretory organs of the human body, a continual waste both of solids and fluids takes place. The friction of the fibres one upon another alters the cohesion and disposition of those particles of matter, which constitute the human frame. A fresh supply therefore of solids and fluids is constantly requisite, not only to assist the growth of the body, but to repair the losses which that body sustains in performing the ordinary functions of life. If that supply be not properly

E 2

made,

\* Percival's Essays, vol. I. p. 129.—Ibid. vol. II. p. 128.



made, langour and weakness will ensue. A want of food, or food of an unwholesome kind, must necessarily disorder the constitution. Against excess of aliment, nature is provided with various means to relieve herself, but against the want of it she has no resource. The too frequent use of food which is putrid or salted is unwholesome. Aliment of that nature vitiates the qualities of the blood, and renders it morbidly acrimonious and putrescent. In consequence of such diet the scurvy of a most dangerous and putrid kind is induced\*. The want therefore of a suitable quantity of fresh vegetables and unsalted meat, is properly included in the causes of chronic weakness. — With regard to diet in infancy, we may observe that the milk of a nurse when in small quantity is seldom good, and by no means fit for the nourishment of a child. The want of woman's milk at the beginning of life is of dangerous consequence to the human species. If the infant be deprived of this natural food, we shall in vain seek for a substitute equally wholesome. The child from the want of human milk will be imperfectly nourished, its stomach and bowels will be disordered, and the very foundation of its constitution will be shaken.

The

\* Lind on the scurvy.

## CHRONIC WEAKNESS. 37

The mind and body being so closely connected, the immoderate exercise of the first disorders the latter. Excess of mental application exhausts the nervous system, and is a frequent and fatal cause of weakness. The constant exertion of the mind on any one branch of science, is more injurious to health than an equal exertion on a pleasing variety of subjects. The study of the abstruse sciences, such as mathematics, metaphysics, and the like, has often a dangerous effect on the nervous system. Studies of a lighter kind are more easily borne, but they should not be pursued beyond the bounds of discretion. It happens unfortunately that mental application is generally accompanied with a sedentary life. The mind, being wholly engrossed with the object before it, forgets its alliance with the body, and seems vainly to fancy that it can exert itself without interruption, and without any loss of time in preserving the health of that mortal fabric within which it is ordained to dwell. The error is often discovered when it is too late to remedy its consequences. Thus the world is sometimes deprived of its brightest luminaries, whose longer existence in this life might have added dignity and happiness to mankind. Corpulency and fulness of habit is unfavorable

ble to a vigorous exercise of the mental faculties; and a weak constitution is by no means the richest soil for the cultivation of literature. A healthful body, whose vessels are neither too much oppressed with blood, nor too much contracted from the want of fluids, is the most desirable habitation for an active soul, that is intent on the improvement of knowledge, and on the service of mankind.—The divine, the philosopher, the lawyer, and the physician, who bestow particular attention on the professions in which they are engaged, and who study at the same time the useful and ornamental collateral branches of literature, are exposed to a powerful cause of chronic weakness. The practice of physic obliges the physician to join exercise to his mental labors. The profession of the law is extremely dangerous to a man of a weak constitution and of a sedentary disposition. His life is to be considered as a life of study, and therefore excess of study should be cautiously avoided.

Not only excessive labor of the mind is pernicious to the body, but various mental affections, such as grief, fear, and anxiety, are justly enumerated among the most powerful causes of chronic weakness. When the mind  
is



## CHRONIC WEAKNESS. 39

is alarmed by fear, tormented by hatred and envy, or distressed by grief and anxiety, the nervous energy is diminished, and the whole system is sometimes thrown into violent agitations. The heart either ceases to move with its natural force, or falls into sudden palpitations from the want of those powers which would have given it a firmer motion. Respiration is generally retarded. The stomach is sensibly relaxed, and digestion greatly disturbed. Such depressing passions of the mind are often succeeded with a miserable degree of chronic weakness. — Even the anxiety, which arises from the ill humor and unkind treatment of others, is deeply felt by persons of tender minds, and consequently proves highly injurious to their bodily frames. Mankind, divesting themselves of all selfish and interested views, should study one among another to promote harmony and good will, and to cultivate those sentiments of mutual respect and kindness, which, as they contribute to their comfort in life, contribute also to their health. It is not enough to avoid giving offence in matters of greater moment. The smaller causes of irritation to a mind of great sensibility are, when they frequently occur, very pernicious to health, and ought therefore to be guarded against

against by every one of an humane and liberal disposition. From inattention to these simple maxims of life, one may see many persons even of good sense perpetually at variance about trifling matters, and who, by living in almost a continual state of uneasiness, have greatly impaired the health of each other.

The unnecessary and imprudent use of remedies is injurious to the constitution; and is a common cause of chronic weakness. This subject has been too much overlooked. I have in a late publication endeavoured to throw together some observations on the abuse of medicine, with a view of promoting a more full examination into that copious and interesting subject. For it is matter of serious complaint that the medical art is often exercised in such a manner as to injure rather than to promote the health of the human species.—The unseasonable and injudicious use of the lancet is extremely destructive to health. Habitual blood-letting is productive of plethora\*, and all its dangerous consequences. It is a common practice, and is frequently established without necessity. By this means thoughtless and ignorant people are led into error, and their constitutions

\* Lect. on the Mat. Med. p. 31. Inst. Pathol. Med. § 391.

## CHRONIC WEAKNESS. 41

stitutions accustomed to prepare more blood than is necessary for the purposes of life.—Sudorifics along with the hot regimen are unskillfully employed in many distempers, both acute and chronic. Their effects and mode of operation are not always sufficiently considered. This abuse has been more remarkable in former times, when the art of medicine was involved in darkness and obscurity. But its bad effects in those times are continued down to the present enlightened age, and will in future ages be yet severely felt by mankind.

The unseasonable employment of emetics and purgatives destroys the tone of the stomach and bowels. Vomiting and purging, frequently repeated, leave those organs in a relaxed state, the common consequence of an unnatural excitement. The habitual use of evacuants is often enjoined without necessity. In particular cases indeed both emetics and purgatives are indicated, and their use is important. If, for example, the stomach from indigestion be loaded with impurities, a gentle emetic ought not to be neglected; for any noxious matters, contained in that organ, are extremely destructive of its tone. A morbid degree of costiveness too is a frequent cause of debility in



the intestinal tube, and if it be not soon obviated, it is often followed with a severe fit of the colic.—But surely that practice is not to be commended which, by the indiscriminate application of purgatives and emetics, relieves few and injures many. For if we destroy the tone of the alimentary canal, we unavoidably reduce the vigor of the whole constitution.

The unnecessary and imprudent use of stimulants has also a powerful effect in diminishing the tone of the stomach and intestines. By this abuse of medicine the action of those parts is unseasonably excited, and their native vigor is exhausted. Bitters and other strengthening remedies are dangerous, when unskilfully employed; and instead of restoring vigor to the constitution, they destroy its tone, and induce a state of weakness. The long-continued employment of either stimulants or bitters is often productive of dangerous effects; for unless those remedies be occasionally discontinued, the symptoms of the disease will probably be confirmed by the very means which were intended to remove them.—Repeated courses of mercurial medicines, especially when imprudently instituted, are very prejudicial to health. The active preparations of  
mercury

## CHRONIC WEAKNESS. 43

mercury are extremely stimulating, and consequently injurious to the stomach and bowels. Chronic weakness is frequently brought on by the unnecessary and injudicious use of mercury in the treatment of the venereal disease. Mercury is an universal stimulant, but particularly adapted to encrease the cutaneous excretion, and to promote a discharge from the salivary glands. The active preparations, such as calomel and the corrosive sublimate, formed by the union of mercury with the mineral acids, are very apt to excite purging, and to run off by the intestinal tube. They are found therefore less certain in curing venereal complaints than the mercurial ointment \*, the simple mercurial pill †, or the calcined mercury.

The improper use of sedatives is very injurious to the stomach and nervous system. Tobacco (which, though stimulant in its first operation, is afterwards sedative) produces a waste of saliva, an unnatural discharge of mucus from the nostrils, tremors of the hands, want of appetite, indigestion, loss of memory, and

F 2

even

\* Fordyce's Elem. of Practice, p. 361, 364.

† Duncan's Observations on Mercury, p. 135.

even paralytic complaints†. Opium, one of the most efficacious sedatives, is often given imprudently, and when rendered habitual, debilitates the nervous system, and becomes a powerful cause of weakness and irritability. I have in several instances known a great degree of debility and relaxation induced by the unseasonable use of opium.—It is a common error to employ heating expectorants in pulmonary complaints of an inflammatory nature, which remedies, by increasing the inflammatory state, weaken and exhaust the system.—The medicines used to remove obstructions of the menses and to destroy worms, which are commonly called emmenagogues and anthelmintics, are often so injudiciously chosen and unskilfully applied, as to cause a total destruction of health. They are frequently strong in their own nature, and dangerously severe in their operation.—In like manner corrosives, antispasmodics, emollients, antiseptics, astringents, and many other sorts of remedies are greatly abused, and by reducing the strength of the system, bring on chronic weakness.—From these few general facts respecting the abuse of medicine, it is obvious that the practice  
of

† These facts respecting tobacco are mentioned upon the authority of Sir John Pringle.



of this art requires strong natural talents and particularly acute penetration; and it is equally obvious that great industry and an extensive liberal education, are essentials in the character of every physician, who upon just ground hopes to acquit himself with honor in the discharge of so important an office.

The unnatural and imprudent treatment of pregnant and of lying-in women, is another common cause of this lingering and troublesome disorder, which fact necessarily leads me to make a few cursory remarks on that subject. The practice of midwifery has been attended with the most pernicious consequences to society. During a state of pregnancy exercise has often been imprudently forbidden, and indolence has been encouraged. Various medicines have been employed without necessity, and without judgment. Evacuations have been too frequently instituted with an unhappy freedom.—During labor the patient, instead of being kept agreeably warm, has often been loaded with bed-cloaths and smothered with heat. Strong caudle has been freely administered to women of an inflammatory habit, who have been unaccustomed to the use of spirituous liquors. By this means women, especially those of nervous and delicate constitutions, are stupified and exhausted.

hausted. The consequences of this abuse are pain, sickness, fevers, floodings, and inflammations\*.

The operations in midwifery have often been attempted without skill, and performed without dexterity. The practice of turning children in the womb and delivering by force, an operation far more serious than many seem to believe, has been too frequent, and in many cases extremely dangerous and absurd†.—The forceps, instead of preserving life, has in numberless instances been made the rude instrument of destruction. The forceps makes a dangerous and unequal pressure upon the child's head, which may prove very detrimental to its future health, and therefore should never be thought of but in those cases where it can be employed with safety, and is absolutely necessary to the preservation of life.—After the delivery of the child, the placenta, or after-birth, has often been hastily extracted, which practice, as we shall afterwards shew, was attended with the most dangerous consequences.

Sweating too after delivery has been unfortunately promoted, which contributed largely to

\* Dr. Mackenzie's Lectures on Midwifery.

† Dr. Hunter's Anatomical Lectures.

## CHRONIC WEAKNESS. 47

to the ruin of many vigorous constitutions. It was an unhappy method of treatment, and has been followed with fatal effects. Nothing could have favored its continuance for so long a period of time, but a very imperfect state of knowledge in this branch of medicine. Though the patient happened to escape from such injudicious practice without any dangerous complaint, yet her recovery was certainly retarded.—The diet of child-bed women has been generally improper. Labor is a natural action, and ought by no means to be considered as a disease. The patient deviates too much from her ordinary diet; she is often forced to eat against her inclination; and thus the natural returns of appetite are prevented\*. A very low diet is proper in some cases, but it is found in many others to retard the recovery and to produce weakness.—If disorders occur either during the time of labor, or after delivery, they have often been imprudently overlooked, or mistaken, in cases where they might have been easily ascertained and happily removed. When the complaint is obvious, the treatment of it has frequently been committed to unskilful persons.—From such practice in the art of mid-

\* Dr. Young's Lectures on Midwifery.



midwifery, the conclusion is obvious that chronic weakness must be a common consequence. Facts confirm this assertion, and too often the unfortunate mother, weak, irritable, and dejected, feels, especially in her declining years, the bad effects of the abuse of midwifery. It is happy for mankind, that in the present age vulgar prejudices are daily subsiding, that their absurdity is fully exposed to view, and that the practice of this useful and necessary art is undertaken by men of medical erudition.

Under this head we shall in the last place mention acute and chronic diseases in general, as causes of chronic weakness; some of which we shall enumerate without much attention to method and arrangement.—Fever, eruptive distempers, hemorrhages, or local inflammations, particularly if there be frequent returns of those complaints, tend to induce a lasting weakness of the constitution.—The animal frame after a fever or an eruptive distemper may soon recover from the very great depression of strength which accompanied the disease; but still a considerable time is required, before it perfectly attains its usual degree of vigor. During the course of a fever there is a violent exertion of the animal powers, which greatly exhausts

CHRONIC WEAKNESS. 49

hausts the system. That exertion is a salutary effort of nature, favoring the removal of the complaint\*. The action of the heart and blood vessels is greatly increased. The pulse is often frequent and full, and in that case denotes the vigor of the living powers. Nervous and putrid fevers, obstinate intermittents, the miliary fever, the small-pox, the worm-fever, and such like maladies of long duration, bring on a state of chronic weakness.—Sudden hemorrhages have a powerful tendency to induce the same effect. When a considerable quantity of blood is evacuated, a greater supply of nervous energy is required to contract the vessels in such manner, that their cavities may be properly adapted to their contents. From this cause there is a want of living power in other parts of the body. Frequent and small hemorrhages in particular occasion a great degree of debility and relaxation†. The hemorrhoids and copious menstruation are powerful causes of this disease.—Local inflammations, producing violent irritation of the system, are sometimes attended with a remarkable depres-

tion

\* See the Author's Dissert. de febribus continuis mendendis.

† Dr. Fordyce's Lectures on the practice of medicine.

sion of strength, and leave a great degree of chronic weakness. This effect more certainly takes place, when large evacuations of blood have been necessary to remove the inflammation, or when the inflammation has been of long continuance, or when, from the disease being mistaken, proper evacuations of blood have been neglected. Hence chronic weakness is no unfrequent consequence of pleurifies and peripneumonies, of rheumatisms, of gouty complaints, of phrensies and other local inflammations.—The dysentery, the cholera, the catarrh, and the humid asthma are productive of general weakness. In these complaints there is often a symptomatic fever, with a considerable evacuation of mucus or of bile. In the dysentery, there is a great obstruction of the intestinal tube, which, if not removed by purgatives, may terminate fatally, or at least bring on an obstinate debility of the stomach and intestines. The cholera, when attended with violent vomiting and purging, leaves great weakness of the system. The catarrh and humid asthma are disorders of the lungs, which, in consequence of their frequency, their permanency, and improper treatment along with an injudicious application of heat, favor greatly the rise and progress of chronic weakness.

There



## CHRONIC WEAKNESS. 51

There are also many chronic diseases of which general weakness is often an inseparable attendant. For whether sense and motion in such cases be injured,—or whether the habit of the whole body or of a great part of it be depraved, without any primary nervous complaint,—or whether the disorder be more strictly local, *partis non totius corporis affectio* \*, the regular functions of nature are frequently interrupted, and the constitution is gradually weakened and exhausted. — A greater or less degree of chronic weakness is induced by the apoplexy and the palsy, the tetany, epilepsy, convulsions, spasmodic asthma, colic, diabetes or hysterical affection. — The same observation sometimes holds good with regard to those chronic complaints, in which the mind is so disordered as to be deprived of the use of reason, that best and noblest gift of heaven. For in melancholy and madness not only the disorder of the brain weakens the general system, but imprudent treatment of those unhappy maladies contributes not a little to the destruction of the patient's health. The unfortunate lunatic is often unnecessarily deprived of the benefit of exercise and fresh air, and he is often treated with rashness and severity —

G 2

With

\* *Synop. Nosologiae Methodicae.*

With regard to cahectic and local complaints, we may observe that the atrophy, fleshy excrescences, dropical effusions, visceral obstructions, scrophula, teething, worms, the repulsion of certain cutaneous eruptions, the jaundice, the scurvy, and the venereal disease, all frequently tend to bring on chronic weakness. Considerable evacuations of bile or of mucus, tho' unaccompanied with fever, have the same effect. Copious evacuations by stool, the fluor albus, a discharge from ulcers, and the gonorrhoea benigna, debilitate the system. The bile and the secreted mucus contain a considerable proportion of the lymph of the blood, which upon just ground is believed to be the most nutritious part of that vital fluid. Upon this principle we can easily account for the weakness, which arises from great and continued evacuations of bile or of mucous matter.—The suppression of the menses from cold, from surprize, or from any other cause, diminishes the nervous energy and brings on weakness\*. Such is the natural sympathy which subsists between the different parts of the body, that the disorders of the womb have a great influence upon the brain and nervous system and depress their powers. Obstruction of the menstrual discharge is always attended

\* Van Swieten Comment. in Aphor. Boerh.

## CHRONIC WEAKNESS. 53

attended with want of appetite, languor, and depression; and thus that morbid affection, which is often a mere consequence, becomes a powerful cause of chronic weakness.—In this place too several other diseases might have been enumerated, such as ruptures, dilatations of the heart and arteries, scirrhus and cancer, morbid affections of the urinary passages, of the womb and organa virilia, along with a great variety of other complaints to which mankind are subject, but which it is not necessary to mention; as a full discussion of this subject would be disproportionate to the present work, and lead us too far into the consideration of the causes of death.

After these remarks it may not be improper to observe that chronic weakness, although it is attendant on numberless chronic diseases, ought not in such cases to be mistaken for the original complaint, but considered merely as symptomatic. The treatment of the original complaint may sometimes be very different from the treatment of chronic weakness, and yet if we remove the first, the patient will gradually recover from the latter. But if the primary affection were to continue, it would in many cases be in vain to attempt the removal of



of a symptom. Such practice is too common, but it is very defective. It is always unhappy when any one who is a general practitioner of physic, but without liberal and extensive views of his profession, has bestowed his attention chiefly on a single *complaint*, to which he is very apt to refer all ambiguous cases, without sufficiently investigating their real nature and causes. It matters not what name be given to the complaint, whether it be called the gout, a latent erysipelas, a nervous fever, obstructions of the viscera, or a latent miliary eruption. Physicians should be warped by no prejudices, but be impartially strenuous in ascertaining the different diseases of the human body, and in applying the most successful methods of cure.

#### DISTINCTION

## DISTINCTION and PROGNOSTIC

OF

## CHRONIC WEAKNESS.

### SECTION III.

**H**AVING given a full enumeration of the symptoms of chronic weakness, it is not necessary to dwell long upon the DISTINCTION of the disease. It would be difficult for any one who understands the nature and history of this complaint, and who is acquainted with the general doctrine of acute and chronic disorders, to mistake the symptoms of chronic weakness. But for the sake of those who may not have had sufficient opportunities of acquiring the principles of their art, it may not be improper to make a few observations on the distinction of this disease.—We have mentioned obstructions of the menses, hemorrhoids, calculous concretions in the biliary ducts, dropical effusions, and  
some

some other affections, as symptoms of chronic weakness, although they frequently constitute original complaints. But the distinction of them as symptomatic or primary, is of the utmost importance with respect to the cure; for the remedies proper to be employed, are often extremely different. The physician therefore should carefully inquire, whether chronic weakness was subsequent to those other morbid affections, or whether it existed before them. He should endeavour likewise to ascertain the particular causes of particular diseases. He should study not only their general progress, but also the manner in which they first made their appearance. By this means he will easily know in what point of view those morbid affections ought to be considered. If they precede chronic weakness, they probably constitute the original complaint. If chronic weakness first took place, and they followed as consequences, they are clearly to be regarded as symptomatic. The causes of obstructions of the menses, of the hemorrhoids, of calculous concretions and dropical tumors, are too many and various to be separately examined into, and enumerated in this place. Nor can we enter with propriety into the consideration of the symptoms of those indispositions. But the knowledge of such particulars is useful in dis-



distinguishing, whether those morbid affections are primary or symptomatic.

Weakness is the predominant symptom of palsy, but it is weakness attended with diminished sensibility of the moving fibres. A morbid state of irritability, on the contrary, accompanies chronic weakness. Palsy is often partial, chronic weakness is always general. The first frequently comes on suddenly; the last is gradual in its attack, and necessarily a work of time. Palsy is often the consequence of an apoplectic fit. An apoplexy may contribute to the production of chronic weakness, but this complaint seldom or never arises from that cause alone.

The hypochondriac disorder is frequently mistaken for chronic weakness. In some cases the mistake is of little moment, but in others it is extremely pernicious. The nature and proper treatment of the hypochondriac affection seems not to be generally understood. Dr. Cullen was the first who publicly taught the true doctrine of the complaint. The hypochondriac disease is commonly supposed to be weakness, attended with timidity and dejection of spirits, without regard to the peculiar temperament of the patient. But Dr. Cullen defines it—In tempe-

H

ramento

ramento melancholico dyspepsia, cum languore, torpore, metu, et mœstitia. This complaint, if it take place in a relaxed constitution, is comprehended under chronic weakness; for the symptoms and the treatment are the same. But if it occur in a person whose fibres are morbidly rigid, it is different in its nature, and requires a different method of cure. The strengthening remedies, useful in one case, are sometimes found hurtful in the other. They increase the rigidity of those fibres, which are already too rigid, and consequently aggravate the symptoms of the disease. Relaxant medicines, warm baths, and mineral waters of a similar virtue, are most serviceable in this case. By such means I have seen several patients relieved in this species of the hypochondriac complaint, who had taken a variety of tonic remedies to little purpose. Rigidity is more apt to occur in the melancholic temperament than in the sanguine. The melancholic temperament is distinguished by black hair, a black eye, and a dark complexion, with a mind slow to anger, but steady in its resentment. The sanguine temperament is the reverse. A fair complexion and an irritable mind are two of its principal characteristics. To distinguish accurately between laxity and rigidity, (a distinction  
of

of the utmost importance) the practitioner should not only attend to the temperament and particular symptoms of the complaint, but also to the nature and action of the causes. For if the causes tend to induce a rigid state of the fibres, rigidity may justly be suspected; but if the causes be such as relax the constitution, they afford a presumptive proof of relaxation and want of tone.

The hysterical affection is often attended with all the symptoms of chronic weakness. But it is distinguished from this disease by the occurrence of fits, with the sensation of a ball in the throat, arising from a spasmodic affection of that part which sometimes threatens strangulation. Convulsions, and a temporary stupor, are frequently attendant on the hysterics, a complaint in which the system generally labors under a morbid state of mobility. Indigestion, heartburn, flatulency, acidity, colic pains, palpitations of the heart, a quick respiration, a copious discharge of pale urine, timidity, changeableness of mind and dejection of spirits, are symptoms that are common to both diseases. If these cases are mistaken, the practice of course is erroneous. For if chronic weakness be considered as an hysterical affection, stimu-



lant and antispasmodic remedies are apt to be employed, and the most effectual means of cure by restoring the strength of the constitution are overlooked or disregarded.

Chronic weakness, when accompanied with hectic symptoms, is frequently mistaken for that species of low nervous fever, which affects the patient for a considerable length of time, without ever arising to any great degree of violence. I have seen this accident happen more than once, and the method of treatment which was adopted was so opposite to the complaint, that the consequences were highly dangerous. The patients, who labored under chronic weakness, were imprudently confined to their rooms, and put on a course of heating antispasmodics and sudorifics along with the hot regimen. By this means the nervous energy was exhausted, and a sudden relaxation of the system induced. The irritability of the body was rendered so great as to exhibit appearances of an alarming nature. The distinction of these disorders is to be made, not from viewing superficially the common symptoms, such as languor and weariness, loss of appetite, pain in the head, dejection of spirits, &c. but from carefully considering the patient's constitution and temperament,

—his

—his age, sex, habit, and way of life,—the morbid causes to which he has been subjected—the season of the year, and the prevailing epidemic—the symptoms which appeared at the first commencement, and during the progress of the complaint, along with the nature, permanency, and regularity of those symptoms. The application of these general observations may be easily made, by comparing the history of chronic weakness with the history of a low nervous fever. A low nervous fever, for instance, is slow in its attack, when contrasted with the violence of an inflammatory or of a putrid fever; but it comes on much more suddenly than chronic weakness. Chronic weakness is seldom or never attended with a hectic fever at its beginning, but febrile symptoms necessarily occur at the very first attack of a low nervous fever. In this latter disease, the depression of strength and languor of countenance are more remarkable, and the febrile symptoms have a more regular appearance.

Chronic weakness is often supposed to be a latent gout, or, in the common phrase, a gout lurking in the constitution. From this error remedies are employed at random, which counteract each other, weaken the constitution, and give

give strength and duration to the original disease. I have known, for example, heating sudorifics and stimulating cordials, in consequence of this mistake, employed in chronic weakness to such excess, as absolutely to exhaust and stupefy the patient. But in order to distinguish chronic weakness from the gout imperfectly formed, the practitioner should remember, that the "gout is an hereditary disease, much connected with a peculiarity of temperament with which men are born, and which is founded on the original stamina of life, communicable from father to son." He should remember that, as Dr. Sydenham has justly observed, "the gout generally attacks persons of advanced age, often not appearing till the thirtieth or thirty-fifth year, which may be considered as the meridian of life. If this distinction of the gout, drawn from the time of its attack, be less characteristic in the present age than it formerly was, it affords one evident proof among many others, of degeneracy of constitutional vigor." The practitioner should recollect that the \* "gout may attack men of every size and temperament; but it has been observed to be particularly partial to those of a large size, of a full habit, of the sanguine phlegmatic or sanguine melancholic temperament,

\* Observations on the Abuse of Medicine.



perament, with a peculiar coarseness of the cuticle." He should consider that "the gout is more common to men, and seldom attacks females; unless being born with the temperament strong marked, they have been more than ordinarily subject to its causes." He should remember too, that when "the gout has once made its appearance, even in an irregular form, it leaves the patient after some time, and then it generally recurs;" whereas chronic weakness, if neglected, advances slowly and gradually on, till the patient is destroyed. From these circumstances relating to the history of the gout, together with the greater suddenness of the invasion, the irregularity of the symptoms, and the nature and action of the causes, the practitioner will easily distinguish that disease at an early period, and not rashly confound it with chronic weakness.

The pyrosis, the chlorosis, and weaknesses of the stomach, often constitute a part of this complaint. The pyrosis, called in Scotland the waterbrash, is a pain in the region of the stomach, attended with an eructation of a watery insipid, or acrid humour. It is a symptom of many diseases, and particularly of those in which the stomach is affected. Its causes and nature are not

not difficult to be ascertained.—The chlorosis is generally no other complaint than chronic weakness. If it is to be considered as a distinct disease, its only characteristic symptom is the desire of eating certain things, such as chalk, earth, sand, &c. which afford not fit nourishment to the human frame. The chlorosis is a disorder which occurs in both sexes, though it is more frequent among females, and has generally, but improperly, been confined to them alone. I have seen cases in which it has appeared in the male sex, and I can add likewise the authority of Dr. Cullen in confirmation of the same fact.—Weakness of the stomach forms an important part of the history of chronic weakness. When it constitutes a primary disease, the following is its character as given by Dr. Cullen. *Ventriculi functio idiopathice turbata, per anorexiam, nauseam, vomitum, inflationem, ructum, ruminationem, cardialgiam, gastrodyniam, et alvum plerumque astrictam, indicata.* But it seldom appears as an original disease, unattended with the ordinary symptoms of chronic weakness. It is very often a symptomatic affection in chronic complaints.

Before we proceed to the method of treatment, it is necessary to consider that part of  
chronic

chronic weakness which is called the prognostic, and relates to the judgment made concerning the future event of the complaint. It is the business of the physician, not only to ascertain and cure diseases, but also, from a just view and comparison of circumstances, to foretel, if possible, what will be their future termination, either when the patient is left to nature, or when he is aided by the art of medicine. He does not deserve the name of a physician, who is not particularly ambitious to know with great exactness the laws of the animal economy in a sound state, as well as the general doctrine of diseases. Without an extensive knowledge of the institutions of medicine, founded not on mere idle speculation but on matters of fact, it is absolutely impossible to ascertain with any degree of probability the termination of a complaint. Ignorant of the doctrine of health and life, the practitioner can only draw weak and imperfect conclusions relative to the doctrine of diseases. Without much medical erudition he may form a superficial judgment, and solemnly prognosticate death when his patient is dying; but he will be unable to inquire into those nice discriminating circumstances, and to make with discernment those just reflections, which mark and distinguish the character of

I

physicians.



physicians. The prognostic of chronic weakness must be ascertained from the consideration of many particulars; the principal of which I shall endeavor to enumerate.

The temperament of the patient is an object of importance in regulating our judgment concerning the future tendency of the complaint. If, for example, the constitution be purely phlegmatic, and the natural efforts of the system to restore health be weak and imperfect, the recovery is tedious and uncertain. Where nature can do little towards her own preservation, the assistance of art often proves inefficacious. If the patient, on the contrary, be of a chearful disposition, and of the sanguine temperament, and if the salutary efforts of nature be regular and strong, there is great reason to hope for a quick recovery. In proportion as the stamina of life are more vigorous, the operations of nature are more powerful and effective.—If the patient be of the melancholic temperament, and his mind of a gloomy cast, he is liable to be dejected and alarmed with trivial incidents. This disposition of mind is a great hinderance to the removal of the complaint. Dejection of spirits, and a gloomy turn of thought, are the most frequent and severe  
in

in the melancholic habit; for in habits of a different sort, such an unfortunate state of mind does not rise to so high a degree, nor is it of so durable a nature.—But this subject is at present involved in great difficulties. For different temperaments are combined together in different persons, and the prognostic in this particular must be regulated by a variety of circumstances. The doctrine of temperaments is capable of much improvement. While physicians considered temperaments as founded on a particular state and condition of the fluids, it was impossible that they should ever arrive at any certain knowledge in this interesting subject. But since they have now begun to make their researches more general, and to inquire likewise into the nature and properties of the living solids, their success will be greater, and their knowledge of the temperaments more accurate and substantial.

If the mind be unsteady, it is an unfavorable sign. If the patient wants resolution, he will be unable to befriend himself; and when a man is constitutionally his own enemy, it is an unthankful office to attempt to convince him of his errors. He will perhaps not be able to avoid the causes of his disorder; or, if

he be prudent for one week, he will in the next be wavering in his resolutions, and in the third he will fall again into his former misconduct. With regard to remedies and regimen, if he do not find great and immediate relief, he will reject the first as unpalatable or useless, and the latter he will regard as too severe a restraint upon his actions. Thus, from the want of perseverance, he will not reap that advantage from the art of medicine, which a more steady man would certainly have done.

If chronic weakness be complicated with chronic rheumatism, with great irritability of the lungs and an habitual cough, or with any other chronic indisposition, which either in some measure does or is improperly thought to preclude the benefit of fresh air and exercise, the case is often mismanaged, the cure is retarded, and the prognostic is unfavorable. In like manner, if the removal of chronic weakness be attempted at that critical period of female health, when the natural courses are disappearing, the method of treatment is more intricate and less successful.

Chronic weakness, like most other diseases, is more difficult of cure in patients who are advanced



vanced in years, than in those who have the advantage of youth on their side. The animal body is so framed by nature, that, in the early periods of life, it gradually increases in height and breadth, till the evolution of all its parts be compleated, and its fibres can admit of no further distention without endangering health. At those youthful periods, a greater quantity of aliment is necessarily taken into the body than passes off by the different outlets. When man has arrived at the meridian of his days, the balance of the system is more equally maintained, and the bodily machine, in the eyes of the anatomist, is constructed upon so perfect a plan as to seem capable of continuing through ages without the smallest appearance of change. We are only made acquainted with the infirmities of years, and the natural dissolution of the human frame, by facts and experience. For so it happens in the ordinary course of things, that the body, after having attained its highest pitch of perfection, and continued in that state for some time, begins gradually to decay. The powers of nature fail, the nervous energy is diminished, the fluids are less nutrient and contain a larger proportion of earthy particles, innumerable blood-vessels are obliterated, and the fibres be-

become more rigid \*. From these facts, it is obvious what judgment is to be formed from the age of the patient with respect to the termination of the disease. If the patient be old, the complaint too is generally of long standing, and more firmly rooted in the constitution.

If, along with general weakness, there be partial weakness to a considerable degree, it is an omen of an unfavorable kind. Partial weaknesses are extremely difficult to remove. Remedies are not employed with equal success, when a disease is attended with any local affection. In some cases of this nature the most efficacious means of cure cannot be used. Hence the danger is always increased, when the mind is remarkably weak, timid, and apprehensive; when the contractions of the heart are feeble; when the function of the stomach is particularly disturbed, and digestion much impaired; when the bowels have lost their tone; or when the kidneys are relaxed, and there is an habitual evacuation of an unnatural quantity of urine. The same observation is also just, if there be great weakness of the seminal

\* Vid. Haller. prim. Lin. p. 502.

minal ducts, attended with a copious discharge of the seminal fluid, or if the uterus be in a very relaxed state, which is indicated by frequent miscarriages, by the fluor albus, and a morbid evacuation of blood from the uterine vessels.

If chronic weakness appears unattended with any visceral obstruction, the prognostic is more favorable. But if any of the viscera be diseased, the danger of the complaint is greatly increased. A fallow unwholesome countenance, which is easily discoverable by those who are conversant among the sick, is one of the most certain signs of visceral obstructions. In some cases such a morbid state may, in its advanced stage, be ascertained by a careful examination of the part affected, whether it be the liver, the spleen, the womb, the ovary, or the mesenteric glands.

To judge rightly of the termination of the disease, it is necessary to consider the profession of the patient and his condition in life. If the profession be unwholesome and the patient be obliged to continue it, a powerful cause of the disease is constantly applied, and its effects will undoubtedly be considerable. This is an unfor-



unfortunate case, but it is one which frequently occurs. I might here have enumerated those professions which are deemed pernicious to health, but from the general rules which have been before advanced, particular cases may easily be ascertained, and just inferences deduced from just premises. Where the fortune and condition of the patient is such, that he is able to relinquish his profession, or to follow some other of a more salutary kind, there is a much fairer prospect of his recovery. Affluent circumstances too give a man an opportunity of enjoying advantages with respect to the means of recovering his health, which people of low condition cannot always procure. A man of fortune may inhabit any part of the globe, he may have the advice and regular attendance of the ablest physicians in practice, and enjoy every benefit of proper diet, of change of air, of exercise and amusement,

The practitioner should carefully weigh the causes of the disease. The obstinacy of the case is often dependent on the severity of the cause. I have given a full enumeration of the predisponent and occasional causes of chronic weakness; and, from what has been advanced on that subject, the reader will in a great measure perceive

perceive their different degrees of power. He will find that the effects of some are small and inconsiderable in comparison of the effects of others.—If the operation of a cause be sudden, and though severe, yet not in excess, the effects of such a cause, after its removal, are seldom of so durable a nature, as when the operation of a cause has been moderate, but continued for a great length of time. Frequent and slow hemorrhages, repeated fits of the gout or rheumatism, and such like lingering complaints, generally induce a more obstinate degree of chronic weakness than a fever or an inflammation of the lungs. If a long-continued state of plethora has, by over-distention of the vessels, exhausted the tone of the system, the weakness is dangerous and extremely difficult to remove. This cause, arising from indolence and intemperance, is often found in a course of years to enervate and reduce the strongest constitutions. The tone of the nervous and vascular system becomes irreparably injured.—Excess in venery, continued for many years, induces a violent state of weakness. This cause often acts in a most powerful manner. The passion which subsists between the sexes is extremely difficult to be restrained, and therefore is frequently indulged

without reason and without limitation. When the vigor of the body is exhausted, the mind is still apt to pursue its favorite haunts, eager in quest of pleasures which it can no longer enjoy.— If neglect of exercise, putrid air, unwholesome food, excess of heat, too severe exercise either of body or mind, the unnecessary use of medicines, &c. have been the causes of chronic weakness, the disease, if taken in time, is of a more remediable nature.—Frequent labors, improperly managed, bring on partial weaknesses, and produce a troublesome and dangerous degree of the complaint, which, as was before observed, is strongly perceived when the patient is in the decline of life.—If chronic weakness occur as a symptom of any other chronic disease, the prognostic must in a great measure be drawn from the nature, causes, and progress of the primary affection.

Another important object of consideration, respecting the doctrine of prognostics, is the nature, duration, and violence of the whole disease. If the relaxation of the muscular fibres be great, if the nervous system be extremely irritable and exhausted, if the tone of the stomach be destroyed, attended with loss of appetite, indigestion, pains, sickness and vomiting, the case



is truly alarming. To these symptoms we may add others of a most unfavorable kind, such as a weak circulation, palpitations of the heart, fainting, a defect of nutrition, paleness and emaciation, restless and watchful nights, a fallow bloated countenance, cold sweats, relaxation of the womb and uterine discharges of blood, impotency and a defect of the venereal appetite, obstructions of the viscera, jaundice, hectic fever, lethargy, anasarcaous swellings and other dropfical symptoms. These are among the fatal forerunners of dissolution. Yet there are cases extant in which many of the most dangerous symptoms of chronic weakness were present, and which nevertheless have admitted of great relief. I knew a young woman afflicted with chronic weakness to a high degree, complicated with tubercles in the lungs, an obstinate cough, obstruction of the menses, hysterics, a fallow unwholesome countenance, and general hydropic swellings of her face, arms, legs, and abdomen; and yet, by exercise, regimen, and remedies, properly adapted to her case, she recovered her health.—But if the symptoms of chronic weakness occur in a milder form, if the constitution appear to have some vigor remaining, if the viscera be sound, and if the patient will prudently submit to follow those rules which

are prescribed for his welfare, there is the greatest reason to hope for success. Yet, before a cure can be compleated, the constitution must be greatly changed, and therefore a sudden restitution of health is not to be expected. In many cases, where health cannot be perfectly restored, it may be greatly improved. Between the most vigorous and the most exhausted states of the constitution, there are many intermediate degrees of health; blest with which, men may attain to a good old age, and pass their lives with happiness to themselves, and with benefit to society. An improving appetite, a slower and stronger pulse, together with a gradual increase of bodily strength, are among the most favorable symptoms of returning health.

THE

THE  
METHOD OF CURE  
IN

CHRONIC WEAKNESS.

SECTION IV.

**H**AVING considered the symptoms, causes, distinction, and prognostic of chronic weakness, we come now to the METHOD OF CURE. This constitutes the most important part of the subject, and therefore ought to be discussed with great accuracy and attention. Having had frequent opportunities of treating this disease, I shall endeavor to give in detail that method of cure, which has been found by experience to be successful.

The indications of cure which we shall lay down are three.

The



The first is to avoid the occasional causes.

The second, to obviate particular symptoms that aggravate the complaint. And,

The third, to restore the tone and vigor of the system.

The rational practitioner will necessarily have in view those three curative indications. In delivering the method of treatment, we shall endeavor without repetition to follow a regular order, as far as is consistent with the nature of the subject. The indications above-mentioned, although they are as few and simple as possible, will, it is hoped, be found sufficiently extensive.

#### INDICATION I.

The occasional causes of the disease are to be cautiously avoided. The observance of this rule is of the utmost importance to the successful treatment of the complaint. No remedies will be found efficacious while the causes, which first brought on the indisposition, continue to act. We shall therefore take notice of some of the principal occasional causes; but  
after

after the remarks which we have already made on that subject in a preceding part of the essay \*, it will be needless to enlarge fully on this indication.

We have said that acute and chronic diseases are often causes of chronic weakness.—With regard to the prevention of fevers and inflammations, we ought to avoid contagion, human effluvia, and imprudent exposure to cold. This caution is particularly proper when the body is heated by exercise, or weakened by luxury and debauch, and consequently more subject to be affected by those most powerful causes of fevers and inflammations. Cold alone is able to excite inflammatory fevers, whether pure or attended with local affections. Nervous and putrid fevers are produced by human effluvia and contagion. Putrefaction increases the virulence of those infectious vapors, which often exist in great abundance, and are of a very malignant nature, in jails, hospitals, work-houses, and all other confined places crowded with poor, who pay little regard to the cleanliness and ventilation of their houses. When any of those diseases occur, they should not be carelessly

\* Vid. p. 21.

lessly neglected, or committed to the hands of ignorance. The judicious application of remedies, at the beginning of a complaint, is of the utmost consequence to its successful termination. The imprudent use or the neglect of them at that period, may prove so dangerous as to render all future attempts to relieve abortive and unsuccessful.—The same observations are true in general with regard to eruptive distempers, which are brought on by cold and contagion, and increased by the virulence and activity of putrid and human effluvia.—Hemorrhages too, morbid evacuations of mucus, bilious complaints, suppressions of the menses, and numberless cases of chronic diseases which bring on chronic weakness, require the application of their own peculiar preventive and curative means, but present far too wide a field to be made the immediate objects of our inquiry †.

Full living is a dangerous cause of chronic weakness, for it induces plethora and overdistention of the blood-vessels. In this state of  
body,

† Vid. Observ. on the Abuse of Medicine, in which there are many facts relating to this subject.



body, blood-letting, in proportion to the patient's strength, may be occasionally required, especially when the pulse is hard and contracted. Small bleedings even are frequently serviceable; for when the constitution is weak, a small quantity of blood will over-load it, and bring on the symptoms of plethora. This evacuation, however, should be used with great caution; for the loss of a large quantity of blood seldom or never agrees with the patient, but often exhausts and reduces him beyond conception. The habitual use of the lancet will inevitably frustrate the intention of the physician, and increase the malady. Temperance in diet, therefore, is to be strongly recommended. The aliment, as we shall afterwards prove, should be of a plain sort, and taken in moderate quantity. Excess of animal food should be avoided, as it yields too much nutriment to the body. The moderate use of vegetables, in proportion to the power of the digestive organs, should be enjoined. Sumptuous tables may please the eye and gratify the palate. They are often a mark of generosity and hospitality, but they are extremely injurious to health. They swell out the body; they bring on plethora, fatness, and inactivity. It is unfortunate that the pleasures of social

L.

life

life should be intermixed with so much allay, and that men do not govern their appetite by the rules of temperance and moderation.

As the neglect or excess of muscular motion is so highly destructive to health, exercise or gentle labor becomes absolutely necessary. "Exercise increases the flexibility of animal fibres; for flexibility is in all cases increased by flexion. It gives greater firmness to the solid matter of the body. The nutritious fluid, as applied for the purpose of nutrition, will, in consequence of its thinner parts being separated by muscular motion, become necessarily more condensed. Exercise, by increasing the action of the solids upon the fluids, tends powerfully to give such condensation to the body. The cellular membrane, a substance of so nice a texture, but of such immense extent and importance in the human economy, will doubtless be rendered much firmer by muscular motion \*.—The tone and vigor of the moving fibres are increased by exercise. The nervous energy becomes greater. Habit is powerful in giving strength and facility of motion.

\* Cullen's Instit. of Med. § 23.

tion \*.—The circulation of the blood, in consequence of the action of the muscles and the pressure made on the arteries and the veins, is evidently accelerated; and along with the circulation, the motion of the lymph in the lymphatic system. But the effect of this pressure is most evident on those veins which are furnished with valves †. It quickens the motion of the blood in its return to the right auricle of the heart; and of the lymph and chyle in its passage through the lymphatic and lacteal vessels into the subclavian vein, in order to be intimately mixed with the blood, and perfectly assimilated to its nature. The contractions of the heart and arteries necessarily become stronger and more frequent, which, with the consequent increased force of respiration, accelerate also the pulmonary circulation. This greater impetus of the blood through the whole system causes most effectually a determination to the surface, and produces a free salutary discharge of the perspirable matter.—By exercise too,

L 2

the

\* Instit. of Medicine, § 114. "Within certain bounds, with respect to force, frequency and duration, the contraction of muscles, by being repeated, is performed with more facility and force."

† Haller's Primæ Lineæ, § 63.



the appetite is increased, the tone of the stomach is restored, and the digestion highly promoted. The blood is determined from the internal viscera of the breast and abdomen, which tends to prevent as well as to remove any obstruction and unnatural enlargement of those organs.—The generating powers of heat acting more vigorously in consequence of muscular motion, increase the native heat of the body. This effect of exercise may in some measure be dependent on the greater vigor of the circulation, and elasticity of the solids.—Exercise too is powerful in obviating the plethoric fulness of the system, and preventing the dangerous consequences which arise from excess of blood. The absorption of the animal oil is considerably promoted, and corpulency and fatness effectually prevented. A state of great corpulency is very unfavorable to health. There is scarce any other state which disposes the constitution to be more frequently or more severely afflicted with diseases\*.

“These are a few of the principal salutary effects of moderate exercise on the human frame.

\* Cullen's Lectures on the Inst. of Medicine.—Vid. Gaub. Inst. Pathol. § 502, 503, 504, 505, 506, 507, 508.

frame.—Walking is well fitted for producing every beneficial change in the animal economy which has been enumerated. It is a natural and wholesome exercise †.—But where the constitution is so much debilitated as to be unable to bear walking without too great fatigue, or where the peculiar nature of the disease renders it less proper, sailing or travelling in a carriage may often be substituted in its place with advantage. These exercises are well adapted to cases of great weakness. They evidently create appetite, accelerate the circulation of the blood, determine to the surface, and promote perspiration. But where the system is vigorous, they are generally found, when used as a remedy, to be insufficient either for restoring or preserving health. Exercise in a phaeton, or in any other carriage where the patient drives himself, is, in all complaints in which the mind is dejected and apprehensive, particularly proper, because the attention is somewhat engaged, and there is less opportunity of making the malady the subject of meditation.—Exercise on horseback, which

† Walking determines the blood in particular to the lower extremities, which in some diseases is productive of salutary consequences.

which is accompanied with considerable muscular motion, is extremely beneficial, and, where it can be used, far superior to the two last-mentioned species, for the purpose of giving vigor to the constitution. It is well fitted, not only for the preservation of health, but for the removal of many chronic disorders, especially of those that are attended with a general weakness of the body and the hypochondriac affection. For the patient, from his dejection of spirits, is apt in these complaints to fall into a state of inactivity, which is the most certain method of continuing and increasing them. But the good effects of every different kind of exercise are in all cases the most evident, when the exercise is pursued with alacrity and pleasure. It is a happy circumstance in life, that exercise is often necessary to the performance of business, in which it nearly concerns us to be active. Those exercises, whether attendant on business or amusement, are the most salutary, which are moderate, but sufficiently continued; and during the course of which, the person is in natural wholesome postures, and breathes a cool pure air. When a patient, of a weak constitution, has been accustomed for some time to gentle exercises, he should, as he gains strength, proceed gradually  
to



to make use of those in which greater muscular motion is required \*. From the neglect of this caution, many continue in a state of weakness, which, without much difficulty, might at first have been easily removed †. Numbers, conscious of a sense of debility, refrain imprudently from those exercises, which would tend most successfully to restore them to a state of health.

“By the neglect of exercise men often render themselves unfit for truly enjoying those pleasures of life, by which the Author of nature intended to promote their happiness, and to excite them to industry and activity. They also make themselves disqualified to act vigorously and successfully in their respective stations of life, in which it was even their duty to have been more prudently attentive to the preservation of their health. They not only injure themselves, but unhappily entail on their posterity the sad effects of their indolence. But if men will not be active to preserve their own health, and do justice to themselves, it will be in vain to attempt

\* Vid. Boerhaave's Aphor. 28; and Van Swieten's Com.

† When a person first begins to use exercise, he finds himself sometimes fatigued and disordered; but by persevering in the use of it, such effects soon disappear as the constitution recovers its strength and tone.

tempt to convince them of their error, by reminding them of the injuries done to their posterity. The neglect of exercise is particularly hurtful to children; in consequence of which the tone and vigor of their constitutions is often miserably destroyed. Often too women at the most critical periods of their lives, from certain erroneous notions which they have ignorantly embraced, injure materially their health by leading a sedentary life. By this means they render that weakness real and great, which before was in fact much less than it appeared to the patient through the deceitful medium of the imagination \*."

If the unwholesomeness of a profession has contributed much to bring on the complaint, that profession must be discontinued, otherwise the complaint cannot possibly be removed. If any business deprive a patient of his natural rest, or if it expose him to excess of heat, or to an atmosphere loaded with dust, with metallic fumes, putrid vapors, or mephitic and phlogisticated air, that business, in spite of all the efforts of art, will continue the disease. Every profession or employment, in which there is any degree of compression in consequence of

un-

\* Vid. Abuse of Medicine, p. 252.

unwholesome positions, or of any other circumstance, is extremely unfit for a patient laboring under chronic weakness. Parents should be particularly attentive to the postures of children, lest, through inattention, a curvature of the spine should be induced. Children should never wear stays, but of the most pliable kind; for while the body is growing, and the bones are gristly, a deformity of person is most apt to occur. Women in general should never lace themselves so tight in their stays as to prevent the freedom of respiration, and to subject them to compression. One would at first thought imagine that the sensation induced would be so uncomfortable, as wholly to preclude the necessity of any caution of this nature. But when we see women, not only of the first fashion, but of good understanding, lace themselves so tight in their stays as to be unable to breathe without a sense of difficulty, we naturally pity them, of whatever rank or condition in life, while they purchase a false elegance of their person at so dear a rate. How is it possible for such ladies to have regular returns of appetite, an easy digestion, and good general health, who, contrary to the most obvious laws of self-preservation,



servation, torture themselves in so ridiculous a manner. It is the misfortune of the present age, that so absurd a fashion is again prevailing among a sensible people.

If the air of a large town disagree with a patient and weaken him, the country air is naturally to be preferred. If a damp air in low grounds is prejudicial, a dry air in an elevated situation will be serviceable. Large companies and public assemblies in unventilated rooms ought to be avoided, because the air is heated, it is rendered relaxing, and furcharged with phlogiston or inflammable principle. The frequent ventilation of rooms by opening doors and windows, is of great consequence to the restoration of health, and is a practice therefore to be strongly inculcated. Pure cool air is extremely salubrious. The fire in common sitting rooms should be small in proportion to their size, and the air preserved of a moderate temperature. During the time of rest the patient should lie on a matrafs in a cool spacious chamber, with the curtains kept continually open, and he should be so covered as to maintain only a moderate degree of heat. He should be particularly attentive not to lie too warm  
in

in bed, nor to encourage a copious perspiration in the morning. Such a habit, which is extremely common, produces great relaxation, and is singularly detrimental to health. It is a very general error to expose the human body too much to the action of heat, with a view to preserve it from the pernicious effects of cold. A moderate degree of cold braces and invigorates the nervous system, and is highly conducive to health. Even an infant, which absolutely requires to be kept comfortably warm, should be cautiously preserved from excess of heat. The influence of cold will be the least considerable upon those, who are frequently, but prudently exposed to its action \*.

With regard to the unnecessary and imprudent use of medicines, a very common cause of chronic weakness, I shall refer my reader to a treatise of observations on that subject, which I have lately published. He will there find exposed some of the most dangerous consequences of the unseasonable and injudicious use of remedies, with remarks concerning the means of preserving health, and curing diseases.

M 2

Too

\* Abuse of Med. p. 210.

Too copious an evacuation of the seminal fluid should be cautiously avoided. Excess in venery will inevitably defeat every attempt to cure the complaint; yet it is a frequent cause, and difficult to be removed. What is excess in one person may be moderation in another. The exact line of just conduct in this respect is not easily to be ascertained. A prudent marriage is often of the greatest service in restoring the health of a debauchee. All allurements and artificial excitements to venery are extremely destructive of health, and should be steadily shunned by both sexes. Natural feelings and strength of constitution should alone be consulted. *Rarissimus coitus* (to use the words of Boerhaave) is sufficient for persons of delicate and weakly constitutions. He runs into excess, who, post *veneris voluptatem*, feels himself cold, faint, and weak. *Etenim summam voluptatem universalis excipit virium resolutio, quæ crebro ferri nequit, quin enervat.* Onanism is extremely common, particularly in public schools; and by this pernicious practice the boy ignorantly ruins his health before he arrives at years of discretion. Une quantité trop considérable de semence perdue dans les voies de la nature jette dans des maux très fâcheux; mais qui le sont bien davantage, quand la même quan-



quantité a été dissipée par des moyens contre nature. Les accidents que ceux qui s'épuisent dans un commerce naturel éprouvent, sont terribles : ceux que la masturbation entraîne, le sont bien plus \*.

Over-distention of the stomach is particularly to be avoided. Nothing is more common in this complaint than for the patient to have a keen irregular appetite; but if he satisfy that appetite, his stomach is over-loaded, and indigestion is necessarily induced, attended with acidity, flatulence, and pains in the stomach and bowels. In this case the disease is often supposed by the patient to proceed wholly from indigestion, although in reality it is chronic weakness, and indigestion is only a consequence. To say that wind, or mucus, or acidity in the stomach and bowels is the primary complaint, is to mistake the effect for the cause. Over-distention of the stomach is a common error, and often followed with very disagreeable symptoms. This is another reason why public entertainments and high living, independent of their tendency to induce corpulency and fatness, are so very pernicious to health.

\* L'Onanisme, p. 4.

health. Many seem to have so little notion of what is called temperance in diet, that if they are set down to a rich entertainment, they are not able to refrain from disordering themselves. After a few hours, some will be distended with wind, some will be severely afflicted with colic pains, others with the heartburn, acidity, eructation, sickness, or even vomiting. During the time of a meal, a man of a weak constitution should consider, not so much what he can eat, as what he can digest; for indigestion injures greatly the tone of the stomach. This disagreeable symptom frequently arises, not only from over-distention, but even from a moderate quantity of food which is of difficult solution. Deserts after extravagant dinners, are a dangerous temptation to those who labor under this complaint.

Excess of study is so powerful an occasional cause of chronic weakness, that very few men of learning are free from the disease. We have before observed, that excessive application of mind exhausts the nervous system. It destroys the appetite, it impedes digestion, it weakens the stomach, interrupts the process of nutrition, induces dejection of spirits, and enervates the mental faculties. As this cause of  
chronic

chronic weakness acts, in proportion to the greatness of the mental exertion, with different degrees of power, it is very necessary to guard against excess of those studies, the prosecution of which requires close attention and depth of thought. Studies of this nature are often accompanied with anxiety and a temporary uneasiness, which are extremely injurious to health. A mind endowed with great acuteness and sensibility, pursues its subject with warmth and ardor; but when it feels itself bounded by its own weakness, and unable to attain the height of literary perfection to which it had vainly aspired, it struggles within itself, and exerts all its strength to break through the fetters that restrain it. When it perceives itself unqualified to accomplish its bold design, it desists from the attempt, but not without reluctance, and a sense of disappointment, joined to the humiliating consciousness of its own debility.

The deep parts of mathematics, of metaphysics, natural philosophy, logic, and such like abstruse subjects, as they require a great degree of mental exertion, are improper studies in chronic weakness. Composition of any kind, whether in verse or prose, where strength of thought,



thought, elegance of expression, and correctness of style, are attended to, is, when closely pursued, a laborious and unhealthful employment. Every study, in which the faculty of remembering and of recollecting is much exerted, brings on great languor and fatigue, and should therefore be steadily avoided. I have often known chronic weakness occasioned by too great mental application, and continued to an obstinate length before the patient perceived, and was convinced of his error. Weak minds are unable to bear the pursuit of any intricate study. Natural history, the history of men and manners, rhetoric and the belles lettres, many parts of experimental and moral philosophy, along with other easy subjects of utility and entertainment, will afford a great variety of studies, which may be moderately pursued without the smallest detriment to health. Reading is far less tiresome than writing, for the reader often is merely passive, and engaged chiefly in attending to facts. The justness of this observation will be clearly seen by a consideration of the study of the law, and the study of medicine; in both which professions the knowledge of facts is the grand requisite.

The

The improper treatment of lying-in women, being a powerful cause of this disease, should be obviated by every prudent means. Of those who practise the art of midwifery, the ignorant should be instructed, the timid encouraged, and the rash convinced of the danger of their practice. The art of midwifery is an art which, in the present age, is justly held in high estimation. That is certainly an useful and a noble art, which relates to the preservation of the lives of women and of children.

During pregnancy, moderate exercise should be encouraged, unless it be contraindicated by floodings, great relaxations of the womb, or some other particular disorder, which is of real importance to require such unnatural restraint. The aliment should be mild, plain, and nutritious; for high-seasoned meats at this time are very improper. A moderate quantity of animal food is necessary, except the patient naturally loaths it; and in that case, milk and the most nutritious vegetables are required. Unnecessary evacuations, especially by \* blood-

N      letting,

\* Vid. a Treatise on the Management of Pregnant and Lying-in women, &c. by Mr. White, surgeon in Manchester.

letting, are very common, but they are very pernicious to women with child.

During labor the patient should be kept agreeably warm, but the imprudent application of heat should be industriously avoided. The curtains should be open, the air cool and pure, and the circulation of it continually promoted. The attendants in the room should be few, and they should in general keep at a distance from the bed. If they be numerous, and croud about the patient, they heat the air and render it impure. By this means the woman is weakened, and the birth of the child is necessarily retarded. If the labor be severe and difficult, and the patient naturally of a relaxed constitution, an impure confined air, together with an imprudent application of heat, proves often dangerous, or even fatal in its consequences. For by such treatment the patient at last becomes exhausted; the natural labor is at a stand; violent measures are adopted; fevers, floodings, and inflammations ensue. A pure and temperate air to a woman in labor is extremely refreshing.

The general use of caudle should be abolished, as being unnatural and pernicious. The period  
during



during labor, as well as for some time after delivery, is critical, and not very convenient for beginning to acquire the habit of drinking wine and spirits. Wine and other stimulants should not be given during labor, except in cases where they are properly indicated. Thirst may be quenched, and the blood diluted by any weak liquor taken cool. Hot things are extremely nauseous and disagreeable. The common caudle given during labor, heats the patient, quickens the pulse, and produces pains in the head, with obstinate sickness and depression of strength. It hardly agrees even with those women, who at other times are unfortunately accustomed to the liberal use of fermented liquors.—The operations of midwifery should be performed with the greatest caution and judgment. During natural labor, the practitioner should give the necessary assistance, but he should not injure the health of the woman, nor increase her misery, by his too great officiousness under the specious pretence of relieving nature, when nature rejects his aid. The operation of turning the child should never be attempted but in cases of absolute necessity. When it is proper, it should be done in a deliberate manner and without violence. Many thousands have been destroyed by the rash and

hasty performance of this single operation. Instruments in midwifery should be used as seldom as possible.

When the child is born, the practitioner, according to the nature of the case, should wait half an hour, or an hour, before he extracts the placenta, or after-birth. If it be a first child, and the muscular fibres of the uterus be strongly disposed to contract, the space of half an hour may be sufficient; but if the woman has had several children, if there be no disposition to a strong contraction, and particularly if she be of a relaxed constitution and subject to floodings, the practitioner should wait near an hour before he delivers the placenta. By this means he will preserve the patient's health, and prevent great discharges of blood. We should reprobate, in the strongest manner, the hasty extraction of the after-birth, without prudently waiting a short time for the contraction of the womb and the kind assistance of nature. The ablest and most experienced practitioners \* of midwifery explode, in the strongest terms, that method of procedure. The quick extraction of the after-birth is attended with an unnatural and

\* Dr. Hunter, Dr. Young, Dr. Mackenzie, Dr. Harvie, Mr. White, Mr. Hamilton, &c. &c.

and depressing pain. It is found to be a common cause of fevers, floodings, and inflammations, which often terminate fatally. It contributes to bring on relaxations of the womb, fluor albus, miscarriages, and habitual discharges of blood of the most obstinate kind. In tearing the placenta away, the uterus has been ruptured, which accident is followed with certain death. At other times a part of the after-birth has been left, and, from its stimulus and corruption, has often been followed with dangerous consequences. When the womb contracts of itself, and separates the placenta, it compresses at the same time those blood-vessels, which were the connecting medium between them. By this means the hemorrhage is inconsiderable. But when the operator tears the after-birth from the mother as soon as the child is born, the womb has not had sufficient time to contract, the blood-vessels which entered into the placenta are not compressed, the blood therefore is discharged in an unnatural quantity, and the constitution of the patient most essentially injured. There is indeed no colorable appearance of an argument to defend the immediate extraction of the placenta; and it is somewhat strange that any one, in this improved state of midwifery, should, contrary to the



the general opinion of the experienced part of mankind, continue in a practice which is so painful, so unnatural, and so pernicious.

Sweating after delivery should be avoided by every prudent means, because it relaxes the cutaneous vessels, and weakens the constitution. The patient should not be confined to live on caudle, or any such unwholesome food. She should in general wait for the natural return of appetite, and may then be indulged with her ordinary diet, when that diet has consisted of mild and simple things. After the first day or two, a little animal food may with propriety be allowed, if there be any desire for it, and no symptom of disease to contraindicate its use. When the patient before delivery has been accustomed to wine or ale, a moderate quantity of those liquors may in general be taken with impunity, and will be found far more refreshing than the common caudle. Such a diet will contribute greatly to promote a speedy and successful recovery. Milk and ripe fruits are absurdly condemned as being improper for a woman in this situation; but when the patient can relish them, and they agree with the stomach and bowels, they may be taken with safety and advantage. We shall afterwards shew that ripe fruits, moderately used,

used, are cooling and gently opening, and that they contribute to obviate the putrescency of the fluids. They are useful in cases of floodings, and in several species of child-bed fevers. But if the patient's stomach and bowels be very weak and irritable, all fruit is to be avoided, lest it produce indigestion and purging, symptoms which depress the strength and retard the recovery. Thus we see that caution is requisite in the management even of the most common things, and that what is useful and proper in one case, is hurtful and dangerous in another.

If there be no particular relaxation of the womb, nor any other accidental complaint which requires the patient to be confined to her bed, she may, in two or three days, be permitted to sit up a while, and then day after day to continue up as long as her inclination prompts and her strength will permit. When she is sufficiently recovered, so as to be able to leave her bed, and to remain up with ease and pleasure, she may, if she has been properly treated, change her room, not only with the greatest safety, but with evident advantage. It is unwholesome to be long confined in the same chamber. If the woman has not been exposed to the imprudent application of heat, and if the change  
be

be made with caution, there will be no danger of her taking cold. The greatest number of women after delivery would, if not disordered by mismanagement, be well in the space of ten or twelve days, with little or no difference in their health and appearance. The custom of a month's close confinement after delivery, is unnatural, and ought to be exploded, as it contributes to lay the foundation of future maladies. If the patient is afflicted with a disease, such confinement may be necessary; but if her labor and recovery be natural, it will be found, particularly in the summer months, to be unreasonable, and will certainly prove injurious to her health.

The infant, for the space of eight or ten months, should be nourished principally on woman's milk. If its mother has not a sufficient quantity, a wet nurse should be procured. By this means we provide in the best manner for the preservation of the child's health, and shun a powerful cause of chronic weakness. The nurse should be a woman of a good character, of a sound constitution, and of an active cheerful disposition. Her milk should be rich both to the eye and the palate; it should not be too old; it should flow with ease, and in sufficient quantity.



quantity. To keep the child on spoon-meat alone, is an unnatural and unwholesome method of diet. To accustom it very early in life to take occasionally a little spoon-meat, is a necessary precaution by way of guarding against any accident, which might disable the child from sucking. Woman's milk is a mild animal fluid, agreeable to the palate, and well prepared by nature to nourish the delicate frame of an infant. Asses milk is the next in choice, as being light and easily digested. The milk of a cow is of a much stronger nature, and of more difficult solution. Bread is a vegetable substance, which, however well made and fermented, requires more vigorous digestive organs to animalize it and convert it into human blood. Taken by an infant too freely as diet, bread occasions indigestion, flatulence, acidity, colic pains, and sometimes purging. But though the child of a weakly woman should not be deprived of human milk, yet a mother of a weak habit should not suckle her own child. The evacuation of the milk, and the fatigue of attendance, would be more than she could bear, and consequently would sink and exhaust her. A healthful prudent mother, with a proper quantity of milk, is the best nurse, and may act in that capacity without any disadvantage

to her own constitution. A gay irregular woman, eager in the pursuit of pleasure and amusement, is perpetually disordering both herself and her child. A thoughtless negligent woman is not fit to be intrusted with so important a charge. A weakly woman, though incapable of suckling her own child, may, in imitation of the ordinary course of nature, have her breasts drawn for one or two months with advantage. The evacuation of the milk is natural, and ought, after delivery, to be continued for some time. Weakness, diarrhæa, feverish affections, and various complaints of the breasts, frequently attend the sudden and imprudent suppression of the milk.

When disorders occur during labor, or after delivery, they should, if possible, be removed at their first beginning, otherwise the consequences may prove alarming. No diseases are more fatal than those of lying-in women, when neglected or improperly treated. An accurate knowledge of the complaint, and the timely application of remedies, are the first requisites to successful practice. The state of the bowels requires particular attention, as those parts are more liable after delivery to obstructions and inflammation. If there be obstinate costiveness and

and colic pains, a glister or a mild laxative is indicated. These facts shew the great connection between the art of midwifery and the art of medicine; for, however conveniently the one may be separated in theory from the other, they are in fact united in the closest manner \*. But it is not my intention, nor would it even be proper in this place to enter more fully into the discussion of the subject of practical midwifery, and of the treatment of breeding women, a subject indeed far too extensive to be included within the narrow limits of this treatise.

## INDICATION II.

The second indication is to obviate particular symptoms which aggravate the complaint. We shall make some remarks here concerning indigestion, heartburn and acidity, colic pains, costiveness, dejection of spirits, and want of sleep.

1. We shall begin then with the symptom of indigestion, and point out the method of obviating it as far as relates to the regulation of diet.

Q 2

A

\* Mr. White's Treatise on the Management of pregnant and lying-in women, &c.



A mixture of animal and vegetable food affords the most wholesome nourishment to the human species. Providence intended us to be almost universal inhabitants of the earth. Man, for this purpose, is endowed with the greatest flexibility, both of body and mind. He is capable of living in low and in mountainous countries; in countries frozen with cold or burnt up with heat. He travels from pole to pole. He visits the Alpine mountains, the flats of Egypt, the ice of Greenland, and the burning sands of Ethiopia. The Author of nature has supplied him with food wherever he goes. He has given him a constitution, which is nourished by an immense variety of things. The vegetable and the animal kingdoms teem with food to satisfy his hunger. His teeth, his stomach, and his bowels, are not perfectly similar in length and structure to those of carnivorous or herbivorous animals; but bear, in this respect, a resemblance to the teeth, the stomach, and the bowels of animals of both kinds.

It is dangerous and unwholesome to live on flesh-meat alone. Such a diet has considerable influence on the properties and qualities of the blood. It increases the putrescent tendency of that vital fluid, and renders it too much of an  
alkaline

alkaline nature. There have been many examples of the scurvy produced by that cause. Dr. Gregory, a late eminent professor of medicine in the university of Edinburgh, mentions in his public lectures several cases of this kind, which fell under his own care, and were completely cured by the use of vegetables. Flesh-meat, moreover, is too stimulating and too nutritious to constitute alone the food of man. We have before taken notice that it tends to bring on plethora, for it produces too large a proportion of the coagulable lymph and globular part of the blood. It occasions heats and feverish affections, and predisposes the constitution to many diseases. Severe exercise and labor might in some measure obviate the effects here mentioned; but the consequence is, that excess of muscular motion and full living would cause so great a consumption of the vital powers, and such a continual exertion of the simple solids, as necessarily to exhaust the system, and prove the causes of an untimely death.

Vegetable food, on the contrary, is of a milder and less stimulating nature. Being acescent, it corrects putrefaction. It is less nutritious than animal food, and is therefore found too weak a diet for many constitutions. It is

unne-

unnecessary, and would be generally improper, for persons in health to live on vegetables alone; though such a diet would be much safer than that which consists intirely of animal food. There are indeed some who have a natural antipathy to an animal diet, and would from inclination live on vegetables. These should comply with the dictates of nature, and indulge her in her particular cravings. If they use gentle exercise proportioned to their diet, they often enjoy a happy state of health, and arrive at a good old age. But if, in any future period of their lives, this instinctive appetite should change, they should change also their manner of living, and use along with their vegetable a moderate quantity of animal food.

Having premised these general observations concerning diet, it will appear evident, that we shall not recommend (as some practitioners have done) animal food alone as proper for those laboring under chronic weakness. Such a practice, if it were generally complied with, would conduce greatly to the destruction of health. But nature opposes it, and, happily for mankind, she opposes it with success. Reason and experience also coincide with her determinations. Yet a vegetable diet is in general extremely



tremely improper in chronic weakness. It produces indigestion, flatulency, pain, acidity, and purging †. A mixture, therefore, of animal and vegetable substances, forms the best diet in this disease.

To obviate indigestion, the aliment should be taken at every meal in moderate quantity, and of the most wholesome kind. It should be dressed in a plain manner, and eat without rich sauces.

The flesh of old animals is more alkalescent than that of young ones; it is more stimulating, and generally of quicker solution in the stomach. The flesh of young animals, compared with that of old ones, is in many cases more gelatinous, more viscid, and less perspirable. There are many examples of stomachs which can digest beef and mutton better than veal and lamb. Wild animals, whether birds or beasts, that are accustomed to a good deal of muscular action, afford in general a nourishment, which is more alkalescent, more stimulating, and more perspirable, than those which are tame, and, being under the direction of man,  
lead

† Haller Primæ Linææ.

lead an unactive life. Animal food is more heating in proportion to the absolute quantity of nutriment, which it contains. For this reason, the most nourishing is often improper in chronic weakness, and if taken too freely, disorders the system. Many stomachs can digest the weaker sorts of meat, which are greatly loaded and oppressed by those of a more gelatinous, viscid, and nutritious quality. A smaller quantity of the most nourishing should suffice. The nutritious matter of the aliment should always be proportioned to the state of the blood-vessels, respecting fulness and inanition. Nutritious food, eat without appetite, and consequently without necessity, will generally be found in this disorder to disagree with the stomach, and to bring on hectic symptoms.

But as different sorts of animal food agree with different constitutions, the patient must be regulated by his appetite, and by repeated trials. Mutton, venison, beef, lamb, and veal, are all in general wholesome meats. Pork, which contains an essential oil, disagrees with some, and is highly valued by others. Cleg-horn, in his account of the diseases of Minorca, observes, that, "of all the kinds of meat, none is here in so great plenty and perfection as pork,

pork, nor is any other so much esteemed by the natives \*." Hares, rabbits, chickens, turkeys, guinea-hens, woodcocks, snipes, pheasants, partridges, quails, larks, and the like, are substances of easy solution. Water fowls, such as the goose, duck, teal, &c. in which there is a strong essential oil, do not agree with all stomachs, though in some cases of chronic weakness they are, in consequence of their stimulating quality, much esteemed. The pigeon affords an alkalescent and stimulating food, but when young is tender, and for the most part of easy digestion. Meat whose fibres are of a firm texture is, if other circumstances be equal, of more difficult solution than meat whose fibres are tender. Animal food should be kept for some time before it is used, that, by having undergone a slight degree of fermentation, it may be sufficiently tender, and easy of digestion. Tough meat is an improper food for a weak stomach. But the meat should not, as is too much the present fashion, be kept so long as to become sensibly putrid, lest, by the constant use of it, the quality of the blood should be materially changed, and the patient rendered more subject to the scurvy and other maladies which

are



are attended with putrescency of the fluids. Salted meat is more or less in a putrid state, and if frequently used as diet, vitiates the human blood. Salt is by no means able to preserve animal substances perfectly from corruption. It only retards, it cannot stop the progress of the putrid fermentation.—The hen's egg, though it is in general aliment of a good kind, yet disagrees with some people, producing colic pains, indigestion, and sickness. A hard egg is rather difficult to digest. Pure blood is nourishing, and in many cases it is of easy solution. The fat of meat is nutritious, laxative, and more soluble than the lean, but, like butter and oil, it is apt to turn rancid, and to disorder the stomach. Roasted meat is by many thought preferable to boiled, as being more succulent, less hardened, and of quicker solution †. Meat which is somewhat rear affords a richer nourishment, and is of easier digestion, than meat which is perfectly done, and consequently drier, firmer, and more insoluble. Meat which is fried, or baked in a pye, is of more difficult solution than that which is moderately roasted or boiled. Meat pyes are greasy and heavy, and seldom digest well in weak stomachs. Cold meat, especially

† Lectures on Materia Medica.

cially in warm weather, agrees better with many than hot.

Fishes are for the most part carnivorous, and feed either upon insects, or upon one another. They are in general of more tender contexture than flesh, and of more easy digestion. They are not so alkalescent, but they are sometimes gelatinous and viscid. I have known many persons with weak stomachs who could digest several species of fish better than any other animal food. There are, however, some who never eat fish with pleasure, and therefore never digest it with ease. Salmon, char, turbot, cod, skate, sturgeon, bret, pike, eel, crab, lobster, cockle, oyster, herring, sole, tench, perch, haddock, &c. afford an excellent nourishment. The eel, the salmon, the lobster, and the oyster, are sometimes found, in consequence of their viscosity, to disagree with weak people. Caviare, which is prepared from the roe of sturgeon, is oily, rancid, and unwholesome. The turtle is gelatinous, viscid, highly nutritious, little perspirable, and only fit for strong stomachs. Dr. Mandeville asserts from his own experience, that he has known many instances of stomach-complaints, in which stock-fish, a dried fish of a less nutritious quality, has been digested with

ease, when the oyfter, lobster, falmon, eel, and other viscid and nutrient foods, have occasioned indigestion. It seems probable that, in these cases, the nutritious matter was too copious and too strong for the assimilating powers. Salted fish, like other animal substances preserved by salt, is unwholesome, and, if used freely, proves hurtful to the constitution.

Milk is a fluid of an intermediate nature between vegetable and animal food. It is not putrescent, but turns acid by fermentation. It is an animal substance of a most wholesome kind to those with whom it agrees. It affords a mild nourishment, and, if not taken to excess, gives but little stimulus to the system. In some constitutions milk turns sour upon the stomach, and forms a curd so viscid that it is very indigestible. Several are remarkably fond of whey and butter-milk, and find them mildly nutritious, acedent, laxative, and cooling. Butter is laxative and highly nutrient, but often turns rancid, and disagrees with the stomach in chronic weakness. I know a lady who can digest butter in a morning with ease, but who is always disordered by it in an evening. Sound cheese is a strong, insoluble, but nutritious substance, and should never be used



as food, except by those who take much exercise or undergo hard labor. Unsound cheese may be eat in very small quantity, but never with a view to nutrition.

The vegetables most proper to be employed in chronic weakness should be those of easy digestion, and which, in consequence of fermentation, do not distend the stomach with fixable air. — The farinaceous vegetables, such as wheat, rye, oats, barley, rice, pease, and beans, are nourishing and wholesome food; and by the art of cookery, an art natural and peculiar to man, they are capable of being rendered agreeable to the palate in a variety of forms. Rye and oats are thought to be the most acceſcent and laxative: They disagree with some, and prove beneficial to others. Rice is gently astringent. Wheat made into bread, well fermented, sufficiently baked, and not too new, is a very excellent food in chronic weakness. Pease and beans contain a large quantity of fixt air, which, when extricated by fermentation, is apt to distend weak stomachs, and to bring on flatulency and colic pains.

The potatoe, turnip, colliflower, cabbage, carrot, onion, asparagus, artichoke, and other  
vege-

vegetables, which have undergone the action of fire before they are used, and consequently are deprived of a considerable quantity of fixt air, agree well with many constitutions. These vegetables, however, are not so wholesome and nutritious as several of the farinaceous grains, nor should they be used so freely by persons whose stomachs are weak. Potatoes, asparagus, and artichokes, are the least flatulent, and often agree in chronic weakness, when cabbage, turnips, and onions will not. Vegetables, such as celery, lettuce, endive, raddish, cucumber, and melon, which have not been subjected in any respect to the action of fire, contain the whole quantity of their fixt air, are more difficult of solution, and in many cases are apt to bring on acidity, flatulency, and distention of the alimentary canal. Cabbage and cucumber are of a firmer texture than colliflower and melon; and it is found by experience that colliflower and melon are not so long retained in the stomach as cabbage and cucumber \*. Cucumber, indeed, has been known to lie forty hours in that organ undigested. Colliflower, potatoes, cabbage, and carrots seldom prove laxative; but endive, lettuce,

\* Lectures on Materia Medica.

rice, cresses, melon, and the like, possess in general that quality.

Nuts, walnuts, chesnuts, pistachio nuts, sweet almonds, &c. are oily, nutritious, and agree well with many constitutions. — The walnut is the tenderest, and most easy to digest; and the filbert is justly preferred to the common nut. They should be used fresh, or kept in a moist place, so as to be easily peeled. — The raw chesnut is firm, flatulent, and difficult of assimilation; but when roasted, it is tender, less flatulent, and of quicker solution. — All these vegetable substances should be eat in great moderation; for too large a quantity of them oppresses the stomach, excites pain, and disturbs the process of digestion.

Honey and sugar are nutritious in a great degree. A saccharine principle is thought by an eminent physiologist to be one of the most nutritious parts of vegetables. Both honey and sugar possess this saccharine principle in its most pure and concentrated state. They are gently opening, especially honey and coarse sugar; and where they agree, they are, if used in moderation, very wholesome. Many of the pernicious effects attributed to them are groundless.



groundless. When taken into the mass of blood, they are acescent, and correct putrefaction. As they possess an antiseptic quality, it is justly doubted whether or no they injure sound teeth †. Honey and sugar, nevertheless, are sometimes found in chronic weakness to create acidity and foulness of the first passages. Honey has been observed to bring on colic pains, and spasmodic affections of the stomach and bowels. I have seen several remarkable instances of this kind.

The summer fruits in general afford a mild and wholesome nourishment. Some are more easily digested than others, and some of seemingly equal goodness have a very different effect on different constitutions. They possess a laxative quality in a high degree. Strawberries, currants, raspberries, apricots, peaches, nectarines, figs, grapes, oranges, gooseberries, cherries, apples, and pears, are among the most wholesome. An apple, when raw, is of a firm texture; but when roasted, it is soft, and of easier digestion. An apple, on account of its firmness, is more difficultly dissolved in the stomach

† The black slaves in the West-India islands, who live much on the dregs of sugar, are said to have good teeth.

mach than a pear. The same observations are applicable also in regard to several other kinds of summer fruits. The patient, therefore, by experience must endeavor cautiously to ascertain which of them agree the best with him, and in what form and quantity they should be taken. He should know at what time of the day his stomach is in its most vigorous state, and at that time eat moderately of them. Fruit is very improper after a full meal. Strong people who use much exercise may bear it, but the weak will certainly pay dear for their imprudence in this particular. Fruit is found by some to be the most wholesome and agreeable upon an empty stomach; but there are many exceptions to this rule. In several cases it may with propriety constitute a part of any meal, but the stomach should not have been previously overloaded. Fruits preserved with sugar, as well as other sweet things, afford, if well digested, a nourishment which is very innocent in the blood-vessels; but they are apt to pall the appetite, to ferment, and produce acidity in the alimentary canal.

Notwithstanding the general utility of vegetables to the human frame, there are some constitutions so much weakened and disordered as

Q

not

not to be able to take them in any quantity without inconvenience. In such cases, when real, and not the effect of imagination and groundless prejudice, vegetables must be avoided, except bread, and one or two others which may be found palatable, and easy to be digested. But even in these cases, the patient, as he recovers his health, should gradually endeavor to accustom himself to the moderate use of a greater variety of vegetables; for the effects of habit on the human body are extremely great. Vegetables, like animal food\*, will often disagree with one who is not accustomed to eat them, when, by a little use, they shall afterwards be esteemed by the same person as palatable and wholesome. I have been myself a witness of facts which justify this assertion.—Vegetables, as they do not tend to induce plethora, nor to excite heat and oppression, are very wholesome to persons of an inflammatory habit. They are particularly proper and grateful in hot seasons, and in hot climates, where men are less desirous of animal food. The moderate use too of ice-cream along with vegetables

\* I knew a physician accustomed to live entirely on vegetables, who, in consequence of eating a small quantity of fish, was afflicted with indigestion and dizziness.



tables is frequently beneficial to the constitution, as it takes off languor, and braces the nervous system.

Tea and coffee, which are to be considered as parts of diet, are, in consequence of their sedative quality, found to be sometimes serviceable in chronic weakness, especially if attended with spasmodic affections. But when they are used strong, or in too great quantity, they are often injurious to the nervous system; they occasion tremors, heart-burn, acidity, watchfulness, and dejection of spirits.

To over-load the stomach with aliment, not only disturbs the process of digestion, but prevents the proper returns of appetite, and necessitates the patient frequently to take food without the smallest sensation of hunger. Mr. John Hunter has by a variety of useful experiments ascertained, that the digestion of aliment is quick or slow, in proportion to the keenness or the want of appetite. If then a patient never allows time for the appetite to return, he will be subject to indigestion from this cause. The stomach and intestines will be over-loaded, and scarce able to move on their oppressive contents. From this cause too, as we shall soon have oc-

caſion to obſerve, obſtructions, obſtinate coſtiveness, and colic pains are produced, which ſometimes throw the inteſtinal tube into preternatural motions, and are followed with a diarrhæa. This diſagreeable habit of eating without hunger might often be prevented by prudently waiting for the calls of nature, and then by ſatisfying them with moderation.

High ſeaſoning of all kinds, as it is ſtimulating and pernicious to the alimentary canal, ſhould be avoided. Pepper and ginger are the moſt heating and inflammatory ſpices, and therefore ſhould be uſed with great moderation. Even common ſalt, which is the wholeſomeſt, ſhould not be taken in too large a quantity. Many are apt to eat muſtard to exceſs. High-ſeaſoned things are often more eaſy of digeſtion than thoſe without ſeaſoning, but they excite an unnatural appetite, irritate the ſtomach, deſtroy its tone, and increaſe the original complaint. Spices uſed too freely are very unwholeſome. They may indeed ſometimes palliate particular ſymptoms, but they are always detrimental to health. We do not mean to condemn the moderate uſe of ſpices, but the conſtant and exceſſive abuſe of them, which is too often obſervable.

Acids,

Acids, particularly the native vegetable ones, moderately used in diet, are grateful to the stomach, assist the appetite, promote digestion, oppose putrefaction, and are for the most part no ways injurious to health. When used in a medicinal view, I have known them in several cases to take off the disagreeable sensation of acidity in the stomach. Pickles are to be considered as sponges of vinegar, and possessed of similar qualities with vinegar itself. But acids, where they disagree, must be steadily avoided. The too free use of them is always very pernicious in chronic weakness, for it disorders the first passages, impedes the process of nutrition, and injures the whole constitution.

It is a good habit not to eat of too many things at one meal, lest variety would provoke the appetite, and lead the thoughtless patient to gluttony and oppression.—Some kinds of animal food are more heating than others, and particularly so to particular constitutions. In this case the patient, when hectic symptoms prevail, should chuse that food which is the least stimulating to the system. Pork, calf's head, salted meats, water-fowls, salmon, herrings, rich soups, and all strong viscid and alkalescent foods, possess in general this quality in



a high degree. As milk and vegetables are much less stimulating than flesh-meat, the temporary use of them is necessary and very serviceable in some cases of chronic weakness.

Manducation, or the act of chewing, should never be performed in a slight and hasty manner. Qui, præ voracitate, cibos solidos, tenaciores, prius quam deglutiant, commandere prætermittunt, ventriculo plus faceffunt negotii, quam natura imposuit \*. The learned Gaubius proceeds afterwards to enumerate the symptoms of indigestion, which occur in consequence of the neglect of manducation. He then justly concludes, Hæc tamen debilibus ac desidibus magis, quam robustis & exercitatis, eveniunt.

With regard to the frequency of taking food, we may observe that two principal meals in a day are generally sufficient, and far preferable to four. Nocent sibi, quorum perpetuo in patinis aut poculis animus est; ut semper pleno ventri nunquam induciæ concedantur †. Nine or ten o'clock in the morning, and four or five in the evening, are thought by some to be the most convenient times. Dr. Cullen is of opi-

nion

\* Gaub. p. 240.

† Ibid. p. 241.

nion that the morning is the wholesomest part of the day for making a principal meal, because the animal system is the most composed, and the least liable to be affected by stimulants.— Fresh food should not be thrown into the stomach among that which is partly digested, and considerably advanced in the process of fermentation. The fresh food will retard the digestion of the old, and will itself be hurried on too fast towards a state of putrefaction. The appetite of a moderate man is generally the best director concerning the nature and quantity of his food, and it should not be cloyed with excess. A spare diet is the most favorable to health and long life.

*Victus tenuis quæ quantaque secum  
Adferat* —

Children require a fuller diet than adults, and a greater frequency of meals; but their diet should consist principally of milk and vegetables, with a very small allowance of animal food.

The too liberal use of wine, or of any spirituous liquors, accustoms the stomach to an unnatural stimulus, which increases its action, and  
confe.

consequently destroys its tone. Fermented liquors, when taken to excess, prove injurious to the whole machine, not only by over-distention of the stomach, but by the action of their narcotic power. From this cause weaknesses of the first passages, attended with acidity and indigestion, are often produced. The stomach, especially in infantile age, should be cautiously preserved from the action of strong stimulants of every kind. From the neglect of this precaution, children, at a very early period of life, are found to labor under chronic weakness, complicated with the gout and other maladies,

Fermented liquors, imprudently taken, are justly esteemed a poison. A man may be thought very sober, and yet drink a large quantity of them, so as greatly to quicken his pulse, and to excite an unnatural heat. A bottle of port or of claret, every day, is too much to be drunk by any one who prefers health to pleasure. That quantity is more particularly hurtful to a sedentary man. On the contrary, a few glasses of a good wine after dinner and after supper, are frequently serviceable in cases of chronic weakness, and will generally be found sufficient, unless the patient has been previously accustomed to drink freely. Wine thus



thus moderately used, obviates putrescency, and promotes digestion \*. It gently stimulates, but does not weaken the constitution. By an excitement of the system, and by a diminution of irritability, it has been observed to render the pulse slower, and mitigate hectic heats †. We would recommend wines of a good body, such as madeira, port, claret, tent, cherry, &c. But if claret, or any other particular wine, as is sometimes the case, turns sour on the stomach, it must then be avoided.

Malt liquors, where the patient is weakened and relaxed, are generally improper. They frequently bring on flatulence, acidity, and diarrhæa. There are, however, many exceptions to this general rule. Small beer, in proper condition, is occasionally a good diluter. Ale and porter are sometimes found to agree with the stomach, to promote digestion, to open the body,

\* Wine and water, with a little lemon juice and sugar, is sometimes found a pleasant and wholesome liquor; removing acidity and promoting digestion.

† Wine has sometimes the same effect in diminishing quickness of the pulse in nervous and putrid fevers, accompanied with great irritability. Dr. Gregory's Lectures.

body, and procure sleep. Porter is a heavy liquor, and should be taken in great moderation.

It is however observable that, in some constitutions, where chronic weakness is attended with hectic fever, the patient, at particular stages of the disease, cannot bear the smallest quantity of wine, or of any generous fermented liquor, without an increase of the hectic symptoms. In such a state of body, all spirituous liquors should be avoided, and the stomach preserved as much as possible from the action of stimulants.

In some cases neither wine nor malt liquors of any kind can be used, but they ferment, become acid, and disorder the stomach. Water with a toast in it is, in such circumstances, a proper diluent. It should be taken cold, as all warm liquors are in general relaxing and pernicious. Cold water strengthens the stomach and clears away impurities. It dilutes the blood, gives tension to the vessels, promotes the secretions, but does not heat or stimulate the system. It may sometimes be necessary to mix a little rum or brandy with the water, when a moderate stimulus is required. Spirits retard fermentation, and prevent acidity. They should

should never be taken pure, nor used but in small quantity. There is danger, lest the proportion of spirits should be increased, and thus the remedy be destroyed by excess.

There are many who cannot make a meal without drinking. They find some fluid necessary to facilitate the solution of the aliment. But this is by no means a rule without exceptions. There are not a few who have a good appetite, and generally eat a hearty dinner without drinking; but who, when they take an unusual, tho' a moderate, quantity of any common liquor, are troubled with oppression of the stomach, and a sense of fulness. But the habit of not drinking, for the purpose of dilution, at a principal meal, is by no means to be recommended as a general one. We only wish to observe, that it is uncomfortable and pernicious to drink always by measure, without thirst. I have heard some people ridiculously advance, that they never were thirsty during the whole course of their lives. The answer is, that they have been too officious, they have anticipated the calls of nature, and have thought their own judgment a surer guide than instinct. By the same unnatural and pernicious method of anti-

R 2      cipation,



cipation, they might have prevented hunger as well as thirst.

2. If, notwithstanding the necessary precautions relative to diet, the aliment should proceed too far in the process of fermentation, and the patient should be troubled with heart-burn and acidity of the first passages, absorbent, demulcent, and emetic remedies will be required.

There is a variety of absorbents used in common practice. Magnesia, chalk, lime-water, and alkaline salts are the most eligible. They all unite with the acid of the stomach and intestines, and form a neutral salt. By this means they obviate acidity, which is a frequent cause of the heart-burn. Magnesia, combined with the vegetable acid, produces a neutral salt that is gently aperient. The neutral, formed by the union of chalk and the vegetable acid, is of an astringent nature. The mild alkaline salts, as they are soluble in water, and unite easily with acids, are very serviceable in these cases. Absorbents should not be used to excess; for by destroying totally the acid of the stomach, they promote a putrid tendency in the animal fluids.

With

With regard to demulcent remedies, gum arabic, the extract of liquorice, and other mucilaginous substances, are useful in supplying the want of mucus, in obtunding the acid acrimony, and defending the sensible coats of the stomach and bowels.

If the acidity be great, and attended with sickness, a gentle emetic is indicated and given with advantage in chronic weakness. To clear the stomach of impurities, ipecacuan alone, or rather with a small quantity of tartar emetic, is found to answer extremely well. In the treatment of children, tartar emetic, as it is without taste, is a most convenient remedy for this purpose. But though it is a fact, that gentle vomiting increases the tone and action of the stomach, yet emetics ought not to be too often repeated. The imprudent repetition of these remedies will render them indisputably pernicious, by exhausting the system and disordering the stomach.

3. Colic pains are a troublesome symptom in chronic weakness. I have observed that they frequently arise from overloading the stomach and bowels with too large a quantity of food. In this case, the contents of the alimentary canal

nal become so considerable, as not to be moved along without a sense of pain and difficulty. The fixt air, which is separated from the aliment by fermentation, increases the uneasiness, fulness, and distention of the intestinal tube. The removal of this symptom consists in clearing the first passages by a gentle laxative, and in moderating the appetite in such manner as not to injure nature by an imprudent excess. The peristaltic motion of the stomach and intestines is able to force on with ease a certain quantity of aliment; but if those organs are weakened and overloaded, that motion is often too languid to perform its natural function.

Independent of this cause of the colic, which is attended with costiveness, and arises from excess of food, the stomach and bowels in chronic weakness are frequently so irritable as to be very subject to spasmodic affections and severe pains, although the body be open, or the patient even labor under a diarrhæa. We palliate or remove this symptom by antispasmodic remedies; the principal of which are opium, salt of hartshorn, musk, and æther. Opium is the most to be depended upon, though musk, æther, and salt of hartshorn have frequently the desired effect. At the same



same time we would caution against the unnecessary use of opium, of which there is just cause to complain. The abuse of opium tends to destroy the tone of the system, to bring on a morbid irritability, and to increase the disease\*.

4. Costiveness is the next symptom which falls under our consideration. It is induced either by excess of food, or by food of an improper kind. It arises too from a diminution of the peristaltic motion of the bowels, or from a want of bile and of other fluids subservient to the purposes of digestion. Costiveness, from whatever cause it proceeds, is often very pernicious in chronic weakness. It brings on pain, anxiety, and indigestion.

When excess of food is the cause of costiveness, moderation, as was before taken notice of under the article of colic, is the only rational means of cure.—With regard to the quality of the aliment, the patient, in this case, should study what things agree best with his constitution. The moderate use of ripe fruits and of other vegetables tends to keep the body open,

\* Abuse of Medicine, p. 277.

open, and is, when the stomach can bear them, serviceable to persons of a costive habit. We have observed that different fruits and different vegetables agree or disagree with different patients, and that experience is the grand criterion which, in this respect, must determine our choice. In cases of costiveness, brown bread, made of wheat mixt with rye, is, when it agrees with the stomach, preferable to bread of a finer sort. Malt liquors are gently opening. For this reason too, butter and the fat of meat, where they are easily digested, are useful in a few cases of chronic weakness; though in others all oily substances, as was before said, turn rancid in the stomach, and are very pernicious. Butter laid on a toast, and not melted, is more easily digested than butter which is melted upon it when hot, and consequently burnt in. Milk renders some people costive, though to others it proves laxative. Old milk is more binding than new, and boiled milk has that quality in a still higher degree. Cheese sometimes occasions great costiveness.

If the stomach and bowels are deprived of the stimulus of bile, on account of biliary obstructions in the gall ducts; or if there be an unnatural torpor of the intestinal tube, with  
great

great diminution of the peristaltic motion, the cautious administration of laxative remedies is highly serviceable. Such practice will immediately relieve the patient, by removing so troublesome a symptom.—Rhubarb is frequently employed as a laxative. It is highly extolled by some practitioners, and abused in the same proportion by others. It has a nauseous taste, but there are many patients who can take it with ease, and find it to have the desired effect.—In some habits oily medicines, which act with little or no stimulus, will obviate costiveness. For this purpose the castor oil is given with success, and proves sufficiently laxative.—Manna, senna, tamarinds, cream of tartar, sulphur, lenitive electuary, jalap, neutral salts, particularly soluble tartar, Epsom salt, and tartarised tartar, are employed. They are often variously combined together, and answer well the purpose of keeping the body open. In this way, lenitive electuary and jalap, mixt with a little oil, are often an useful composition; not disagreeable to the taste, nor severe in its operation. The neutral salts alone frequently disappoint the practitioner, either by not operating at all, or by purging the patient too much.—Though gentle laxatives, when they will answer, should always be preferred; yet,



in several instances, lenitive electuary, manna, fena, tamarinds, and other mild remedies, occasion flatulency and pains in the intestinal tube. In some constitutions, therefore, the warmer laxatives, such as aloes and gum guaiac, are given with propriety and success. Aloes, in particular, is, in this disease, a medicine of much importance. It operates principally on the larger intestines; and, when prudently given, it seldom exceeds the intention of the practitioner. In consequence of its stimulant effects, it is obviously improper in the hemorrhoids, and especially when they are attended with a descent of the rectum. Sulphur, oils, and the mildest laxatives, which do not stimulate the part affected, are the most eligible in these cases.

When laxatives of any kind are employed in chronic weakness, the practitioner should study to suit them with exactness to the patient's constitution. The body should be kept open according to the nature of the case; but much purging should in general be cautiously avoided. Such an evacuation would weaken and increase the complaint. There is only an exception or two, where plethora and visceral obstructions are present, which indicate gentle purgatives.

In

In such cases Harrogate water and sea water, taken in moderate quantity, and at a proper season, are very useful and efficacious remedies. Stools of a dark clay color are frequently a sign, in this disease, of some impediment to the free passage of the bile, and indicate opening medicines. At other times they occur, not from any obstruction of the liver, but merely from want of blood, and languor of circulation, in consequence of which a sufficient quantity of bile is not secreted \*. These two cases should be accurately distinguished, and not confounded together; for purging gives relief in the one, and does hurt in the other.

It may not be improper to caution here against the unnecessary use of purgative remedies; a practice so frequently detrimental to health. "The freedom with which they are sometimes employed on the most trivial occasions, would almost persuade one to believe that some were of opinion they might be gi-

S 2

ven,

\* The same thing happens to women after delivery respecting the secretion of the milk. When a woman who is very weak and emaciated, has a child, there shall be scarce any milk at all; but when she has recovered her strength, and has another child, the flow of the milk shall be found abundantly sufficient to nourish it.

ven, not only without danger, but with absolute impunity. On the contrary, purgatives of every kind are unnatural to the human constitution. They are capable of considerably exciting the alimentary canal, and of inducing a state of debility, which may render it unable to discharge the necessary functions of the animal economy with ease, constancy, and vigor\*."

"No prudent practitioner of medicine would ever presume to order a purgative without the clearest evidence of its necessity, and the fairest probability of removing a greater evil than the remedy itself is capable of producing†." In cases of costiveness, along with extreme weakness, where we dare not risk even the operation of the mildest laxative, glisters are indicated and employed with success.

5. Dejection of spirits is another symptom, which requires the utmost attention of the practitioner to palliate or remove it; for it is generally connected, in this disease, with alarming apprehensions, timidity of mind, and some degree of false imagination. In the proper management of this symptom, there is an opportunity for the physician to show much judgment and address.

\* Abuse of Medicine, p. 74. Ibidem, p. 77.



address. The very sight of some practitioners does good to their patients. But these are men of an humane and generous disposition. They feel for their fellow-creatures in distress. Humanity forbids them to increase the uneasiness of their minds, and generosity teaches them to disdain every little consideration of interest, which is not perfectly consistent with the patient's condition in life. Their conversation, which is manly, rational, and untainted with the low deceits of a craft, both soothes and animates the mind. It affords at once entertainment and instruction, social pleasure and rules of health. The physician should study and humor the different dispositions of his patients. The careless should be brought to a sense of their situation by a cautious admonition of their danger. The timid and desponding should be encouraged into the pleasing hope of a recovery by a favorable account of their cases, and by a faithful representation of similar ones which have admitted of successful treatment. There are some patients of such a temper of mind, who, if the practitioner should perceive that they were not so ill as they imagined themselves to be, and then should honestly inform them of his sentiments, would immediately dismiss him as a man ignorant of the disease. Some patients,

tients, on the contrary, are happy when the practitioner gives the most favorable report of their case, and are distressed, beyond expression, when he paints it with a gloomy aspect. Such and so great are the differences of opinion, which actuate the human race. The physician, therefore, should be a man of the world. He should be able to read internal characters from external signs. He should not study men and manners in the common superficial way, which consists principally of the knowledge of a few idle, but fashionable, forms and ceremonies, that only require opportunity, some attention, little judgment, but no depth of understanding. He should endeavor to penetrate at once into the mind, and to ascertain with a cautious exactness the ruling passion. He should observe countenances, gestures, words, and actions, and yet seem as perfectly regardless of these things as if he made no observations upon them. He should with all possible care gain the confidence of his patient; and if he should happen to be intrusted with any family secrets, or to be informed of any family distresses, he should act with the utmost regard to honor and humanity. The artful man, without sincerity, is, in my mind, a most detestable object. He is not to be feared by a man of sense, but he is

is heartily to be despised. The artifice employed by an honest man is an artifice intended to promote the happiness of society. A good heart has great influence on an able head.

The patient, who is afflicted with dejected spirits, should have his mind constantly engaged in business or amusement. I mention business first, because it is of the first importance. It is business alone which can give a just relish to amusements. Amusements, without business, are too trifling to be the chief objects of a rational being; for the mind, in this situation, conscious of its superior talents, looks down with contempt on the little things in which it finds itself solely engaged. Business, besides, is more important than amusements, and the mind always attends more closely to important pursuits. If the patient is not employed in any occupation, with a view to his livelihood, there are a thousand rational ways of spending his time, both in improving himself, and in serving mankind. In the choice of his employment, he should consult his own taste, and form a judgment for himself. There are duties of the sublimest sort, which a superior fortune enables a man to perform. There is too a variety of useful studies which he may prosecute with pleasure



pleasure and success. He has the world of science before him as matter of noble speculation. The earth, through the good providence of God, teems with riches for the happiness of man. The study and practice of the art of farming has employed the mind, and effectually removed dejection of spirits. The study of botany, and other branches of natural history, which, when followed with alacrity, is conducive to an active life, has also been attended with the happiest effect. When one is pursuing some laudable employment, innocent amusements afford a double pleasure. They prevent the mind from dwelling on the disease. Riding, walking, fishing, driving a single-horse chair, shooting, hunting, skating, chearful company, light reading, cards, back-gammon, &c. are often serviceable in dejection of spirits. Amusements which are accompanied with fresh air, and agreeable exercise, are the most healthful. Gentle motion puts off low spirits. Hunting is too severe an exercise, but the pleasure of following the hounds in some measure compensates for the fatigue, and renders it, upon the whole, conducive to health. Chess, all games, and every species of gaming, where very close attention is paid, or where the mind, from the greatness of the stake, is in perpetual anxiety,

anxiety, are very pernicious.—The patient should never indulge a love of solitude; for solitude will as certainly increase his disorder, as a chearful intercourse with agreeable companions will contribute to remove it. But he ought to avoid all company in which he does not feel himself perfectly at ease, and free from restraint. Good company is generally the most easy; and ease, which has no connection with rudeness or a want of delicacy, is the first requisite of good breeding.

6. Watchfulness, or sleep that is disturbed and unrefreshing, is another symptom which the physician must particularly endeavor to obviate. It often arises from the patient's lying too many hours in bed. That kind of indulgence defeats the very end which it was intended to answer.—From this cause some are apt to wake early in the morning, and to be immediately alarmed with fears and apprehensions.—Others soon find themselves unable to sleep in the beginning of the night. Fatigued at length with their restlessness, they fall perhaps on a dose late in the morning; by which means they soon acquire the habit of lying awake in the night, and of sleeping in the day, which is a very pernicious one, and ought to be changed. The patient should not be in

T

bed

bed above seven or eight hours; and whether he has rested well or not, he should constantly rise at his usual time. Sleep, like hunger, will generally return at last, where the constitution is not absurdly pampered and indulged. Exercise, and even moderate labor, are excellent means for procuring sleep, with the want of which the active and laborious part of mankind are seldom troubled.

If the patient make a plentiful meal at supper, the consequence in many cases will be a general sense of uneasiness, nocturnal heats, oppression of the stomach, and want of sleep, or sleep unrefreshing and interrupted with frightful dreams. But this observation holds good only during the presence of a disease; for when a man is in health and exercise, a plentiful supper, if he be hungry, may be taken without any disadvantage. Sleep, with a full stomach, is neither unnatural nor unwholesome. On the continent there are whole nations among whom the supper has been the principal meal for ages past, and the inhabitants have not found any just cause to change this part of their method of living. The brute creation, almost without exception, go to rest after a full meal; and however imperfect the analogy may be in many other cases, it is in this evidently strong and just. Man too, like other animals,  
finds



finds himself, after a plentiful meal, to have naturally a disposition to rest, and it can hardly be supposed improper and unwholesome to follow the undoubted guidance of nature \*. Reason, in this instance, is of inferior authority. I have the honor of being acquainted with several eminent physicians, who maintain it as a fact founded on observation, that digestion is performed in as perfect a manner during sleep, as at any other time. I know many people in health, who take a hearty supper without the smallest inconvenience. Numerous facts of this kind are manifest to the most superficial observer.—But, notwithstanding these remarks, I would by no means be understood to recommend the supper as a principal meal. I am confident such a habit is often very hurtful to the constitution. For though a man in health and in exercise may eat freely at supper, yet one who is not in health, or who, if in health, is not in exercise, will certainly be injured by it. When I speak of the exercise in consequence of which a man may be allowed to

T 2

eat

\* Sleep after dinner is not unwholesome, provided the constitution requires it, and the person has not been too many hours in bed. But when any one lies during the night eight hours in bed, sleep after dinner is an absurd indulgence, which will seldom answer any good purpose, and may often prove hurtful.

eat suppers, I do not mean a trivial saunter, or loitering for an hour or two in an easy carriage, but exercise which approaches to moderate labor. If a person be in health, and only uses gentle exercise, suppers will contribute to overload his constitution, to induce plethora, over-distention of the vessels, and an unhappy train of consequences.

When, notwithstanding a proper attention to exercise and regimen in every respect, there is still an obstinate watchfulness, antispasmodics and opiates are required. But opiates should in this case be used with caution, and never without absolute necessity. If the dose be too large, the patient is apt to wake in the morning sick, faint, and dejected.—We may just hint too in this place, that if any particular symptom of chronic weakness should disturb the patient in the night, the natural return of sleep will depend on the removal of the irritating cause, whether local or more general, and whether connected with pain or with anxiety.

There are several other symptoms, which seem to require a full and separate consideration, such as obstinate head-achs, vomiting, chronic rheumatism, worms, diarrhæa, feverishness, obstruction

tion of the menses, biliary concretions, &c. But the removal of these, as symptoms of chronic weakness, depends principally on restoring the tone of the system, and therefore we shall have occasion here to make only a very few observations upon them.

Obstinate head-achs are sometimes relieved by topical bleeding, by shaving the head, by blisters, issues, setons, warm fomentations, antispasmodics, mild sudorifics, &c.—Frequent vomiting requires a strict observance of the rules laid down for the prevention of indigestion. Gentle emetics, absorbents, laxatives, saline mixtures, cordials, aromatics, opiates and other antispasmodics, may be occasionally indicated.—The chronic rheumatism is sometimes relieved by volatile liniments, blisters, leeches, frictions, gum guaiac, the oil of turpentine, decoctions of the woods, neutral salts, antimonials, Dover's powder, and other gentle sudorifics.

Worms, when they occur in consequence of relaxation in the stomach and bowels, are a symptom of chronic weakness, and are evidently to be overcome by strengthening the whole constitution. We may just take notice, that the powder of tin is a valuable remedy in this case.

Mild



Mild mercurials, and purgatives too are sometimes required; but they are often used with imprudence, and prove extremely pernicious.

A diarrhœa, according to its peculiar nature, is to be removed by emetics, laxatives, absorbents, demulcents, cordials, and opiates. Laxatives should not, as is too frequently the case, be promiscuously used without indication. They are indicated and given with success when there is any morbid matter in the bowels, which ought to be removed. Rhubarb, in this case, is thought by many to be a convenient laxative. When absorbents are necessary, chalk is to be preferred, as it proves gently astringent. Aromatics, infused in red wine, are useful cordials. But, when the diarrhœa is connected with an irritable state of the intestinal tube, opium is in general the most important remedy.

Feverishness from cold is a very frequent occurrence, and aggravates the symptoms of chronic weakness. The means which are adapted to remove it are many and various. The cooling antiphlogistic regimen, but not always in its fullest extent. The saline mixture, nitre, and the spirit of Mindererus. Blood-letting, in cases of plethora; whether venous or arterial. Blisters, especially

especially when there is any local affection. Laxatives, with a view only to keep the body open, except when plethora is present. Emetics, either in full or divided doses, but particularly tartar emetic and James's powder, which, when administered at the first attack, are frequently successful in removing the fever. Wine and cordial stimulants. Mild sudorifics, employed without the hot regimen. Opium, and other sedatives, given for the purpose of removing the symptoms of irritation. Tonic and strengthening remedies, the principal of which is the Peruvian bark.

When the obstruction of the menses is to be considered as a primary disease, it is not an object of our present inquiry. When it occurs as a symptom of chronic weakness, it is most effectually removed by remedies which restore the tone of the system. Warm and stimulating laxatives too are sometimes used with peculiar propriety, just at the period when the menses are naturally expected. If the menses should at last return with pain and difficulty, warm fomentations, pediluvium, opium, musk, and other antispasmodics are indicated.—Calculous concretions in the biliary ducts, when they occur as symptomatic in chronic weakness, require the general cure of the

the complaint. Laxatives, emetics, antiscorbutic juices, absorbents, opiates, antispasmodics, and corroborants, are found serviceable. Opiates are principally to be employed, when, from a spasmodic affection, there is pain in the region of the liver. But when this symptom takes place, emetics are evidently dangerous, and blood-letting in full habits is often useful.

### INDICATION III.

We come now to the last part of the cure, in which the indication is to restore the tone and vigor of the system. This important change is to be made by the use of astringents, stimulants, and tonics. These remedies, when prudently administered, strengthen the system. But they are often employed in such an improper manner, as to disagree with the patient, and to increase the disease. The prudent exhibition of a remedy is of the utmost consequence to its successful operation. But ignorance and prudence are perpetually at variance. They oppose each other with warmth, and, by the unhappy conflict, reason is degraded, society is injured, the order and harmony of things is strangely perverted. Astringents, stimulants, and tonics, being all strengthening medicines, it is difficult to draw the exact



exact line of distinction between them. Astringents, which increase the firmness and cohesion of the simple solids, do necessarily increase the tone and contractile force of the living fibres. Stimulants and tonics likewise, which act principally on the living fibres, have considerable influence on the simple solids.

Before we proceed to inquire into the particular use and misapplication of astringents, stimulants, and tonics, it may just be hinted, that we have already treated of the good effects of exercise and of cold air, which are powerful strengtheners of the system. I must repeat it, that excess of warmth, and the neglect of exercise, will certainly frustrate every attempt towards a cure. Good aliment, if it be not well digested, will not afford proper nourishment to the body. The best corroborating medicines will not restore the tone of a weakened constitution, unless the stomach be able to extract their virtues. But the good effects of them will never be completely obtained by any one, without the assistance of cold air and exercise. For this reason, whatever prevents the application of cold air and the use of exercise, is extremely unfavorable to the cure of chronic weakness. When the patient's indolence and caprice hinder the successful operation

U

ration

ration of remedies, the humane mind is naturally hurt, and pity is moved at the sight of distress, which might otherwise have been happily relieved.

ASTRINGENT remedies are found efficacious in the removal of chronic weakness. They give strength and firmness to the simple solids, and consequently assist the action of the muscular fibres. They invigorate the contractile power of the heart and arteries. They restore tone to the stomach and bowels; they give appetite, moderate the process of fermentation, prevent acidity, and promote digestion.

The uva ursi, the bark of the oak, campeachy wood, tormentil and bistort, are frequently given with this view, and are efficacious astringents. The boles, dragon's blood, and japan earth, are said to be sometimes serviceable, but their operation is weak and uncertain.

Alum is a powerful astringent. It is a composition formed by the union of an argillaceous earth with the vitriolic acid. It is a natural production, but one which may be easily imitated by art. Applied to the lips, it renders them pale, by producing a constriction of their vessels.

sels. It possesses the power of hardening animal substances, and of preserving them from corruption \*. It is a remedy which is often employed with great advantage in chronic weakness. Its efficacy is obvious in relaxations of the stomach and bowels †, and of the urinary passages. It is particularly serviceable, when there is a local relaxation of the uterine vessels, attended with a flooding or too copious a discharge of the menses. Alum readily dissolves in aqueous fluids, and, when properly diluted, enters into the circulatory system, and is applied to every part of the body. It is a remedy of an active operation, and may in many cases be taken in considerable doses. But alum will by no means agree with every constitution, for it is sometimes found to irritate the alimentary canal, and to excite pain and sickness.

U 2

Galls,

\* Vid., Sir John Pringle's Observations on Septics and Antiseptics.

† Percival's Essays, vol. 2, p. 196. "This remedy, when continued for a sufficient length of time, seems to abate flatulence, to obviate spasm, to improve the appetite, and to strengthen the organs of digestion." Dr. Percival likewise mentions several cases of obstinate colics, which were cured by the use of alum.



Galls, given in moderate doses, have been employed with success in great relaxations of the system, and particularly in uterine hemorrhages which have endangered life\*. They possess strong stiptic qualities, and a powerful remedy, used with judgment, is requisite in a dangerous disease.—The sugar of lead, so called from its sweetness, being a composition of lead and a vegetable acid, has also been recommended in similar cases. It is indeed a most powerful astringent, but its pernicious effects on the nervous system, have deterred the regular practitioner from using it with any degree of freedom.

STIMULANTS are a class of remedies that are extremely numerous. The following are those which are in general use among the ablest physicians, and many of them seem evidently possessed also of antispasmodic virtues. Peppermint, cinnamon, lavender, canella alba, cloves, ginger, camphor, gum guaiac, Virginian snake-root, balsams, mustard, horse-raddish, castor, asafætida, æther, salt of hartshorn, wine, spirits, common salt, &c. But it is unnecessary to enlarge either on the chymical composition, or the natural history of these remedies; for they are subjects

\* Dr. Fordice's Lectures on the Practice of Physic.

jects already well discussed in books of chymistry, and of the materia medica.

The prudent use of stimulants often affords much relief in cases of chronic weakness, especially when that disease is accompanied with great languor and torpor of the living powers. Stimulants excite the action of the nervous system. They accelerate the circulation, promote the discharge by the skin, and eliminate from the blood those putrescent particles, which are often retained in consequence of languor and debility. They increase the peristaltic motion of the alimentary tube; they retard fermentation, prevent ascidity, and forward the digestion of the aliment. By this means the appetite is improved, and the process of nutrition carried on in a more perfect manner. I have already observed, that the moderate use of spices along with our aliment, is not only admissible, but evidently proper in chronic weakness.

Stimulants may be united with tonics, whose salutary operation they sometimes promote, as they tend to prevent them from producing any sense of weight and oppression in the stomach.—Hot inflammatory stimulants should be employed with caution; for when used too freely, they  
cause

cause a morbid circulation of the blood, excite an unnatural heat, and injure materially the constitution. I have known them indeed given in so acrid a state, as to excoriate the patient's mouth and throat. The reader will easily judge how dangerous the effects of such a remedy must be, on so delicate an organ as the human stomach. It seemed as if the practitioner was of opinion, that the acrimony of his medicine would insure its success.—No stimulants should ever be employed for a great length of time without intermission, for the long-continued use of them is a notorious abuse of medicine.

In some constitutions where the hectic fever is strongly prevalent, stimulants of every kind, especially in hot weather, are found to heat and disagree with the patient. I have seen several instances, in which even the mildest stimulants have produced this effect. In these peculiarities of temperament, the physician, perceiving that his patient is of an inflammatory habit, will naturally desist from the use of stimulants, and endeavor to alleviate his sufferings, by a practice founded somewhat on the cooling antiphlogistic plan, but without the use of unnecessary evacuations.

Tonics



TONICS are the last remedies that we shall have occasion to mention. They are justly ranked among the most valuable that are used in the cure of chronic weakness. They obviate the laxity of the habit, and tend to remove the very cause of the complaint. They strengthen and consolidate. They increase the nervous influence, and consequently facilitate the performance of the different functions of the animal economy. They invigorate the contractions of the heart and arteries. They increase the tone of the alimentary canal, and promote the digestion of the food and the process of nutrition. They obviate a morbid excess of general irritability, which distresses the patient, and renders him subject to have the ease of his mind and body disturbed by every trivial incident. They take off a sensation of trembling about the heart and stomach, which is a frequent and distressing symptom in this complaint. "If costiveness arise from weakness of the alimentary canal, they tend to remove it. If a diarrhæa occur from irritability and relaxation, they check the discharge by directly obviating the cause. If colic pains, loss of appetite, frequent vomiting, palpitations of the heart, dejection of spirits, obstruction of the menses, defective perspiration, &c. are the consequences of weakness and mobility, no remedies are

so

so well adapted for the removal of those morbid affections \*."

The tonics to be employed in chronic weakness are cold bathing, the preparations of steel, and chalybeate waters, bitters, and the Peruvian bark.

Cold bathing is an excellent remedy. The application of the water is made to the surface of the body, but by means of the general sympathy which takes place, its tonic effects are readily communicated to the most interior parts. It strengthens in particular the system of the absorbent and exhalant vessels, and moderates too copious an evacuation by the cutaneous pores. It is a powerful bracer, and very serviceable in the removal of irritability. Cold bathing destroys too that unnatural delicacy of constitution which arises from excess of heat, and is so extremely distressing to the patient. For while that delicacy subsists, his happiness is the sport of every wind, and the instability of his health keeps pace with the changeableness of the weather. Such a state of body, which, from the inconsiderateness

\* Abuse of Medicine, p. 307.

ness of mankind is frequent beyond expression, renders the person a true object of compassion.

The degree of coldness in the water should be proportioned to the patient's strength of constitution. If the water be too cold, it will prevent that salutary re-action of the heart and arteries, which is indicated after bathing by the sensation of a gentle universal warmth. To promote this re-action of the vascular and nervous systems, the patient should have acquired by exercise a moderate degree of heat before he goes into the water. It is often proper, in cases of great weakness, to begin with a temperate bath, and afterwards to proceed to the use of one which is colder. For this purpose the waters of Buxton and Matlock, in Derbyshire, are often highly serviceable in chronic weakness.

Bathing in the sea, when it is properly indicated, is found in fact to be more efficacious than bathing in the cold bath. The water of the sea is impregnated with salts which stimulate the surface, and contribute to excite the re-action of the system. The greater specific gravity of the sea water, gives a greater pressure upon the surface of the body. The sea breezes too promote

X

appetite,



appetite, assist digestion, and invigorate the constitution.

But whether the water be salt or fresh, the frequency of bathing and the time of continuing in it, can only be determined by the nature and symptoms of the disease. To bathe three or four times a week is generally sufficient. A patient who is greatly debilitated should not bathe too frequently, and he should remain in the water but a single moment. One of greater strength may use the bath more freely, and continue in it for a few minutes. Cold bathing is particularly adapted to remove the lingering pains of chronic rheumatism, which are a common attendant on chronic weakness. Swimming in a temperate water is an useful exercise, requiring the action of almost every muscle. It may be employed too at a season of the year, when the warmth of the weather will not admit exercises of a different kind.

The preparations of steel are medicines which are highly valued in this disease. They are safe as well as efficacious tonics; and in this respect, therefore, preferable in general to the preparations of copper, which nevertheless have of late been recommended by several eminent physicians,

atis in particular cases of chronic weakness. From a chymical analysis of the human body, a small portion of iron is found by the accurate chymist to be one of its constituent parts.

Steel, when rendered soluble in aqueous fluids, by means of its union with an acid, has a successful operation in strengthening the system. The salt of steel, a neutral in which steel and the vitriolic acid are combined, is a valuable remedy, and capable of producing very good effects. It will dissolve in water, enter the vessels, mix with the blood, and be distributed over the whole system. When steel is finely powdered and taken in substance, a portion of it is dissolved by the vegetable acid which is in the first passages, and by this solution its action on the human body is promoted.—The effects of steel are very general in removing all the symptoms of chronic weakness. It is a medicine well adapted to obviate relaxations of the womb, to remove obstructions of the menses, or to check preternatural uterine discharges, whether of mucus or of blood.

For the same intentions, the use of chalybeate waters are strongly recommended; and where there is no venous or arterial plethora, they are remedies which are extremely useful in restor-

ing the tone of the system. The cold water in which the steel is contained, contributes to the efficacy of the medicine. Mineral waters of the chalybeate kind are particularly serviceable in the glandular obstructions of children and young people, which frequently take place in very weak and relaxed constitutions. In such cases mineral waters, possessed of a purgative quality, are frequently used, but never without pernicious consequences. Chalybeate waters support the strength of the patient; and, by penetrating into the minutest vessels, they tend to wash out of the system every species of acrimony, which is capable of irritating the tender and delicate substance of the lymphatic glands.

The chalybeate water of Scarborough is of singular utility in chronic weakness, and is justly celebrated in the present age. Scarborough has the united advantages of a good situation, of a wholesome air and a neighbouring sea. Other steel mineral waters, such as those of Spa, Pyrmont, Harrogate, &c. are valuable and efficacious medicines. The artificial Pyrmont water, which is made by impregnating water with fixt air and iron, has of late been frequently employed with success. The fixt air tends to moderate the fermentation in the stomach,



mach, and to prevent putrefaction. The Bath waters too are possessed of a chalybeate quality\*, and, from their peculiar nature, are at once both stimulant and tonic. They are often of great service in chronic weakness, and particularly when the stomach and bowels are much diseased, the appetite depraved, and the digestion weak†.

Besides the intrinsic efficacy of these mineral waters, the patient, who resorts to public places, has the benefit of change of air, exercise, of relaxation from business, chearful and agreeable company. These circumstances, taken together, are of importance in promoting the recovery of health. Chearful company is often particularly serviceable to a mind weakened and dejected. The exercise of travelling is, for the most part, as pleasant as it is useful; and a freedom from the anxiety of business is frequently not to be obtained, but by a change of place, and a removal from the hurrying scenes of life.

Bitters, and the Peruvian bark, are the last tonic medicines we shall mention. They are valuable  
remedies

\* Vid. Falconer on Bath Waters, p. 291.

† Ibid. p. 343.

remedies in the cure of chronic weakness. They contribute much towards the removal of the complaint. They increase the tone of the system in a high degree, and facilitate the performance of the different functions of the body, whether animal, vital, or natural. By increasing the tone of the circulatory system, they obviate sickness and fainting, which take place in consequence of weakness and irritability. They often relieve in cases where hectic symptoms are evidently present, tho' sometimes hectic symptoms, especially in very warm weather, are increased by these remedies, and contraindicate their use. The bitters most commonly employed, are gentian, chamomile, tansy, orange peel, sima ruba, zeduary, eleutheria, and columbo root. The Peruvian bark is experienced to be one of the most useful remedies in chronic weakness. But it is a vulgar error to suppose that the bark will agree with every constitution. It is sometimes found of little or no service in this disease, especially in some dry, lean, and bilious habits. Bitters and the bark may be taken in various forms, as is most agreeable to the patient. The decoction, the infusion, the extract, and the powder, are frequently employed. The cold infusion of the bark is stronger than the decoction; but the powder, when it agrees with the stomach, is preferable to  
any

any other preparation. These remedies are frequently given along with the vitriolic and other mineral acids, all of which are observed to retard fermentation, to prevent acidity, produce appetite, and promote digestion.

With these remarks concerning tonics, I shall conclude this treatise on chronic weakness. The subject of it is undoubtedly important, however imperfect the execution may be. On this point candid and judicious readers will form an opinion for themselves, and their opinion ought always to be considered as decisive. The author may truly affirm, that he has spared no labor to avoid obscurity and the misrepresentation of facts; and that, besides his own observations on the disease, he has had frequent opportunities of hearing the sentiments, and of seeing the practice of several eminent physicians, whose genius and erudition do honor to the age in which they live, and whose names will be most respectfully transmitted to posterity.

During the course of these observations, we have seen what various means are to be employed in the cure of chronic weakness. Different remedies are requisite in different cases, whether they be intended to palliate particular symptoms,  
or



or to eradicate the complaint. An injudicious choice of them frustrates the intentions of the physician, and leaves the unhappy patient to struggle on with the miseries of his disease. Such is the variety, and such are the peculiarities of constitutions, that a remedy, which relieves one person, will injure another. It is therefore of great importance that the physician should be extremely attentive to acquire an exact history and knowledge of the case, and judiciously to select those medicines which are best adapted to the patient's temperament, and to the peculiar symptoms and nature of the affection. The most efficacious remedies should be given in the most simple, elegant, and agreeable forms. Elegance of prescription, without simplicity, is not sufficient. Simplicity of prescription is of the first importance towards successfully ascertaining the respective virtues of different medicines.—Besides the necessary application of remedies, we have found that a strict attention to regimen is of the utmost consequence. Those practitioners are deceived, who assert that regimen is little to be regarded in chronic weakness. We would fain hope there are but few who are so blind to the real welfare of their patients. Without a proper regimen, the operation of remedies will disappoint the otherwise reasonable expectations of the physician.

physician.—The patient, knowing the abilities of the practitioner, and having entered on a course of proper remedies, should submit himself to his care, with full confidence of obtaining all the relief which the art of medicine can safely procure. He should remember that, considering the obstinacy and previous duration of his complaint, a sudden change from a state of morbid relaxation to a state of natural tension, however desirable at first sight it may seem, is not only impossible in the nature of things, but were it even possible, would, in all probability, be attended with the greatest danger.

T H E   E N D.

MVSEVM  
BRITAN  
NICVM





